

We knew we needed to invest in our country by first investing in education.

The same thing is true with competitiveness. We can talk about a lot of actions that might achieve our goals, but education is the starting point. We have documented the technological challenges to our country from many different angles. The founder of Microsoft, Bill Gates; the chairman of Intel, Craig Barrett; a journalist, writer Tom Friedman; and the National Academy of Sciences have all told us this. All agree we need to strengthen students' proficiency in science, technology, engineering, math, and foreign languages. The America COMPETES Act invests in the R&D and education our country needs to make sure we remain the world's technological innovator.

In our increasingly global economy, we need more youth to pursue math, science, engineering, technological, and critical foreign language degrees. Our young people also need an appropriate knowledge and understanding of the world beyond our borders. You have heard me speak many times on the floor about one of our Nation's greatest public servants, my predecessor, the late Senator Paul Simon. Paul understood that our country needed to invest in math and science. He also envisioned a United States populated by a generation of Americans with a greater knowledge of the world, a generation of our Nation's future leaders that has been abroad and has a personal connection to another part of the world.

In the months before his untimely death, Senator Simon came to Washington. I met with him. We talked as well with his former colleagues about the need to strengthen our Nation's international understanding in the 21st century. Paul Simon knew that America's security, global competitiveness, and diplomatic efforts in working toward a peaceful society rest on our young people's global competence and ability to appreciate language and culture beyond the United States.

I filed as an amendment to this bill an amendment which we have entitled the "Senator Paul Simon Study Abroad Foundation Act." It is an initiative that honors Paul's commitment to international education and brings his vision one step closer to reality. The Simon Act encourages and supports the experience of studying abroad in developing countries, countries where people with a different culture, language, government, and religion will give a person a different life experience. It aims to have at least 1 million undergraduate students study abroad annually within 10 years and expands study-abroad opportunities for students currently underrepresented.

The Simon Act establishes study abroad as a national priority and provides the catalyst for the education community to commit to making study abroad an institutional priority. An independent public-private entity, the Senator Paul Simon Foundation,

would carry out the goal of making studying abroad in high-quality programs in diverse locations around the world routine rather than the exception. Students who were previously unable to study abroad due to financial constraints would be eligible for grants. The grants would also provide colleges and universities and other nongovernmental institutions financial incentives to develop programs that make it easier for college students to study abroad.

We can't afford not to invest in thoughtful Federal initiatives that foster innovation. We must ensure that future leaders understand science and engineering and the world in which they live. The future of our country depends on having globally literate citizens. I believe the Paul Simon Study Abroad Foundation Act would help to achieve that goal.

There is one other area that would be helpful when it comes to competitiveness. Most of us know today what a miracle computers have turned out to be. They really bring so much information to our fingertips which long ago was hard to find. I can recall as a college student walking across the street to the Library of Congress, sending in the little slips of paper and ordering a big stack of books and searching through them to find information which I can now Google in a matter of seconds. That is great. That information is helpful. But if one is going to be able to take advantage of that opportunity, one needs to have access to high-speed computers.

There are many parts of America—Washington and Capitol Hill would be good examples—that have broadband access now. We take it for granted. I represent a diverse State, Illinois, which has the great city of Chicago as our largest city but also has a lot of small towns and rural areas, not unlike Tennessee or New Mexico. It is important for the development of education, health care, and business for us to expand broadband access in America to areas that are currently not served.

I have introduced a bill, which is being considered before the Senate Commerce Committee, on broadband access. I would like to share a statistic which Members might consider. According to the OECD, the United States fell from 4th in the world in broadband access per capita in 2001 to 12th in 2006. As of 2006, the International Telecommunication Union listed the United States 16th worldwide in terms of broadband access. We are now behind South Korea, Belgium, Israel, and Switzerland, among other nations.

In today's highly competitive international markets, our children, businesses, and communities are competing with their peers around the world for jobs, market share, business, and information. It concerns me that with the size and dynamism of our economy, we are falling behind in an area where we should have a natural advantage. As we committed ourselves to a National De-

fense Education Act to make sure we had trained people, educated people to compete against the Soviet Union in that era and now in the world, we also need to make sure the tools for competition are available.

I will be offering this broadband access act not as an amendment to this bill but at a later date. I hope those representing States across the Nation who believe there are digital divides will join me in making sure this important tool is available to every American.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Mexico.

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that at 2:17 p.m., the Senate proceed to vote on or in relation to amendment No. 929; that at 2:15 p.m., there be 2 minutes of debate equally divided between Senators BAUCUS and DEMINT or their designees and that no amendment be in order to the amendment prior to the vote; that upon the conclusion of the vote, Senator KENNEDY be recognized to speak on the bill; that following Senator KENNEDY, Senator COBURN be recognized as provided for under the previous order.

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

The Senator from Mississippi.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, let me inquire of the parliamentary situation. I believe, under the agreement, we will now go off this legislation, and we are ready to have some remarks with regard to the judicial nomination for the Southern District of Mississippi.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, that is to begin at noon.

Mr. LOTT. So are we ready to proceed? I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to begin my remarks in support of this nominee.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF HALIL SULEYMAN OZERDEN TO BE U.S. DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF MISSISSIPPI

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the hour of 12 noon having arrived, the Senate will proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 76, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Halil Suleyman Ozerden, of Mississippi, to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of Mississippi.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will be 10 minutes of debate equally divided between the chairman and ranking member or their designees.

The Senator from Mississippi.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, it is my pleasure be here to speak on behalf of the confirmation of Halil Suleyman Ozerden to serve on the U.S. District

Court for south Mississippi. I am truly pleased that the President has nominated this outstanding young attorney to this position in Mississippi. I thank the Judiciary Committee for the expeditious handling of the nomination. I particularly thank the chairman, the Senator from Vermont, Mr. LEAHY, and the ranking member, Senator SPECTER, for moving the nomination forward.

I made it a particular point of pronouncing his name and trying to get it correct because this is a very highly qualified nominee but an unusual one. I believe he will probably be the only Turkish American to serve on the Federal judiciary anywhere in America. We didn't select him because of that, but it is a fact. He has an outstanding record, and he will be an outstanding member of the judiciary.

Long before I knew this young man, I met his father. Sul is the son of a Gulfport, MS, doctor, psychiatrist, a Turkish immigrant, and naturalized U.S. citizen. He was truly a well respected citizen in the community as well as a doctor.

I met him back when I was in the House of Representatives, years ago, in the 1970s, as a matter of fact. His father came to visit my office on the Mississippi gulf coast one day to thank me for a controversial vote I had cast, one that was particularly unpopular with a lot of my constituents. Well, now, House Members are not used to people actually coming to their office and thanking them for casting a vote a lot of people disagree with, so I took a particular liking to this doctor, and I stayed in touch with him and his family over these past 30 years.

But I was particularly impressed, as I watched the doctor's son grow up and achieve such a tremendous record.

I began hearing about Sul, his professional accomplishments, and the impact that he was having on the gulf coast community. Now one of the most respected young lawyers in Mississippi, Sul may soon have the rare opportunity to serve both his community and his country as a Federal judge.

During my time in the Senate, I have had the opportunity to deal with countless judicial nominees. Seldom have I seen a nominee who comes as highly recommended—and who is as highly credentialed—as Sul Ozerden.

This young man graduated from what was then a very large high school in Mississippi, Gulfport High School, in 1985. He was salutatorian in his class. He then attended Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service on a Navy ROTC scholarship, graduating magna cum laude and Phi Beta Kappa in 1989.

Following graduation, he served 6 years active duty as a commissioned officer and naval flight officer in the U.S. Navy, where he achieved the rank of lieutenant as an A-6E Intruder bombardier/navigator. He was awarded the Navy Commendation Medal for missions flown over Iraq during Operation Southern Watch and Somalia during Operation Restore Hope.

After his military service, he earned his law degree from Stanford Law School, where he served as associate editor for the Stanford Law Review. Following law school, he clerked for the Honorable Eldon Fallon, U.S. district court judge in New Orleans, before returning home to enter the private practice of law in Gulfport.

That is an incredible record, outstanding record—in high school, in college, in the military, and law school, and he served as a clerk to a Federal judge. He has all the credentials that will qualify him for this position.

He then returned to the gulf coast as a shareholder in one of the gulf coast's most respected firms, Dukes, Dukes, Keating & Faneca, where his practice has focused on general civil defense litigation, representation of local law enforcement and governmental entities, and commercial transactions and litigation.

In addition to his professional accomplishments, Sul is also involved in his community, as his father was. He has served as a mentor in the Gulfport Public School District. He has been named "Volunteer of the Year" by the Gulfport Chamber of Commerce, an area where we have had a lot of voluntarism in the last 2 years to help people and help our communities recover from Hurricane Katrina. He served on the board of directors—and as president—of the Gulfport Chamber of Commerce. He also served as the president of the Gulfport Business Club. He was also named as one of the Sun Herald newspaper's "Top 10 Business Leaders Under 40" for the southern part of the State of Mississippi.

He is active in his church, St. Peter's By-the-Sea Episcopal Church, where he is on the church's building committee—an extremely important position within a church seeking to rebuild from devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina.

President Bush has nominated one of south Mississippi's finest to fill one of Mississippi's most important positions. Sul's academic credentials, brilliant mind, analytical ability, legal skills, world experiences and common sense are rare qualities in one person. The Federal judiciary is lucky to have the opportunity to secure the services of Sul Ozerden, and I look forward to his confirmation.

Mr. President, I do not know when I have supported a nominee to be a Federal judge in Mississippi more than I do this one. I am very proud of this nomination, and he will surely be overwhelmingly confirmed in a few minutes. Sul Ozerden, of Gulfport, MS, will be a credit to his parents, the community, and to the Federal judiciary.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, I am very pleased this nomination is now before the Senate. The nominee is very well qualified to serve as a Federal judge. He is a highly respected lawyer

with a keen sense of fairness. I think he will reflect great credit on the Federal judiciary.

Sul graduated magna cum laude from the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service, where he was a member of Phi Beta Kappa.

After graduating from Georgetown, he attended the U.S. Navy Flight School in Pensacola, FL, and then served for 5 years as a naval officer. He served as a bombardier and navigator aboard A-6E Intruder aircraft and was awarded the Navy Commendation Medal for missions flown over Iraq and during Operation Restore Hope in 1992 and 1993. He also completed deployments to the Western Pacific and to the Persian Gulf aboard the aircraft carrier USS Kitty Hawk from 1992 to 1994.

Sul is also a graduate of the Stanford University School of Law, where he served as an associate editor on the Law Review.

He then served as a law clerk to the Honorable Eldon E. Fallon, U.S. district judge for the Eastern District of Louisiana.

He then joined the law firm of Dukes, Dukes, Keating & Faneca in Gulfport, MS, a highly respected law firm in our State. He has practiced in State and Federal courts throughout the Southeast and served as lead counsel in a wide range of complex cases.

Sul is ranked by his fellow lawyers at the highest levels of professional accomplishment. He received a unanimous "qualified" rating from the American Bar Association's Standing Committee on the Federal Judiciary.

Mr. President, I have come to know this nominee well and his family members who are outstanding citizens of the gulf coast area, of the State of Mississippi. I am very pleased he accepted the nomination and is prepared to take his place on the bench of the Federal court in our State. I am very pleased to urge the confirmation of this nominee.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, today we consider the nomination of Halil Suleyman Ozerden to be a U.S. district judge for the Southern District of Mississippi, which until recently had been considered a judicial emergency. By approving yet another lifetime appointment, we continue to proceed promptly and efficiently to confirm judicial nominees.

With this confirmation, the Senate will have confirmed 16 lifetime appointments to the Federal bench so far this year. There were only 17 confirmations during the entire 1996 session of the Senate. This means we have already confirmed almost the entire total of confirmations for the entire 1996 session, and we are still in April of this year.

The Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts lists 48 judicial vacancies, yet the President has sent us only 27 nominations for these vacancies. Twenty one of these vacancies—almost half—have no nominee. Of the 16 vacancies deemed by the Administrative Office to

be judicial emergencies, the President has yet to send us nominees for 6 of them. That means more than a third of the judicial emergency vacancies are without a nominee.

I have worked cooperatively with Members from both sides of the aisle on our committee and in the Senate to move quickly to consider and confirm these judicial nominations so that we can fill vacancies and improve the administration of justice in our Nation's Federal courts. The nomination we consider today has the support of both Senator COCHRAN and Senator LOTT.

Mr. Ozerden is just 40 years old, quite young for a lifetime appointment to the Federal bench. Mr. Ozerden has worked for the past 8 years as a commercial litigator for the Gulfport, MS, law firm of Dukes, Dukes, Keating & Faneca, P.A. Before pursuing a legal career, he served for 6 years on active duty as an aviator in the U.S. Navy.

I have urged, and will continue to urge, the President to nominate men and women to the Federal bench who reflect the diversity of America. Mr. Ozerden is the son of a Turkish immigrant. I am encouraged when we can reflect positively on the diversity of our Nation and the contributions of immigrants.

The Senate will confirm Mr. Ozerden. It will not repeat the slurs that many used against Senator OBAMA. Whether a person's middle name is Suleyman, Hussein, or Ali, that person should be considered on merit, not through the eyes of prejudice. Our Nation must rise above mean-spiritedness and the short-sighted politics of fear. Consistent with our heritage as a nation of immigrants, we should recognize the dignity of all Americans whose work contributes to building a better America. The diversity of our Nation is a strength for our country and remains one of our greatest natural resources.

That said, I understand the disappointment of members of the African-American and civil rights communities that this administration continues to renege on a reported commitment to appoint an African American to the Mississippi Federal bench. In 6 years, President Bush has nominated only 19 African-American judges to the Federal bench, compared to 53 African-American judges appointed by President Clinton in his first 6 years in office. With an ever-growing pool of outstanding African-American lawyers in Mississippi, it is not as if there is a dearth of qualified candidates.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The senior Senator from Pennsylvania.

Mr. SPECTER. Mr. President, I have sought recognition to add my endorsement for the confirmation of Halil Suleyman Ozerden to the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Mississippi. The distinguished Senators from Mississippi have already spoken at length about his outstanding qualifications, and I associate myself with their remarks.

It is a matter of considerable distinction to be a magna cum laude graduate

from Georgetown University. And a law degree from Stanford is impressive. His service as a lieutenant in the U.S. Navy, with the impressive service he has performed there, has been specified in some detail.

He was unanimously rated "qualified" by the American Bar Association. The vacancy to which he has been nominated has been designated as a "judicial emergency" by the nonpartisan Administrative Office of the Courts. I urge my colleagues to vote to confirm this very distinguished nominee.

I note we have a significant number of vacancies at the present time. We have 14 vacancies on the courts of appeals. Six nominees have been submitted to the Judiciary Committee, and it is my hope we will process these nominees promptly. There have been a number of blue slips not returned by Senators. Under the practice of the committee, the nomination will not be processed until blue slips are returned by the Senators. So I will be communicating directly with the Senators involved, urging them to return the blue slips so we may go forward.

There are six of those vacancies where nominations have been submitted. There are eight vacancies without nominations. I have discussed this matter personally with the President and have written to him in addition so the letter could be disseminated among the various White House officials who are charged with the responsibility for proceeding there.

On the district courts, there are 34 vacancies. Twenty-two nominations have been received, and it would be my hope they would be processed promptly. Twelve are awaiting nominees. The vacancies constitute a substantial number.

The total number of authorized circuit judges is 179. There are 14 vacancies, for a 7.8 vacancy percentage. The total number of authorized district judges is 674. There are 34 vacancies, for a 5-percent vacancy rate. It is important these vacancies be filled.

Where we do not have judges—and quite a few of these vacancies are judicial emergencies—there cannot be the processing of these cases. As a lawyer with substantial experience in the courts, I can attest firsthand to the importance of having judges on the job. When the vacancies are present, other judges are compelled to do extra duty.

So I urge my colleagues to cooperate in the processing of these nominations and vacancies. I, again, renew my urging of the White House, the President, to submit nominations for these vacancies.

COMPLIMENTING SENATOR CASEY

In conclusion, may I note how much I appreciate the Presiding Officer, the other Senator from Pennsylvania. I do not call him the junior Senator from Pennsylvania, although he has been here a lesser period of time than I have. I think the difference is 26 years and 3 months to 3½ months. But Senator CASEY has already made a distinguished mark on the Senate.

I think it not inappropriate to note for the record that he and I meet on a weekly basis and have held joint hearings on the juvenile gang problem in Philadelphia and on the issue of the proposed merger of Independence Blue Cross and Blue Shield with Highmark from the western part of the State, that we were together in Pittsburgh recently for the induction of a court of appeals judge and a district court judge.

My compliments to Senator CASEY on his distinguished service already.

Mr. President, I note the time has arrived for the vote, so I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. If all time is yielded back, the question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of Halil Suleyman Ozerden, of Mississippi, to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of Mississippi?

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There is a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. JOHN-SON), the Senator from Illinois (Mr. OBAMA), and the Senator from Michigan (Ms. STABENOW) are necessarily absent.

Mr. LOTT. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Arizona (Mr. MCCAIN) and the Senator from Ohio (Mr. VOINOVICH).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 95, nays 0, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 136 Ex.]

YEAS—95

Akaka	Dole	McCaskill
Alexander	Domenici	McConnell
Allard	Dorgan	Menendez
Baucus	Durbin	Mikulski
Bayh	Ensign	Murkowski
Bennett	Enzi	Murray
Biden	Feingold	Nelson (FL)
Bingaman	Feinstein	Nelson (NE)
Bond	Graham	Pryor
Boxer	Grassley	Reed
Brown	Gregg	Reid
Brownback	Hagel	Roberts
Bunning	Harkin	Rockefeller
Burr	Hatch	Salazar
Byrd	Hutchison	Sanders
Cantwell	Inhofe	Schumer
Cardin	Inouye	Sessions
Carper	Isakson	Shelby
Casey	Kennedy	Smith
Chambliss	Kerry	Snowe
Clinton	Klobuchar	Specter
Coburn	Kohl	Stevens
Cochran	Kyl	Sununu
Coleman	Landrieu	Tester
Collins	Lautenberg	Thomas
Conrad	Leahy	Thune
Corker	Levin	Vitter
Cornyn	Lieberman	Warner
Craig	Lincoln	Webb
Crapo	Lott	Whitehouse
DeMint	Lugar	Wyden
Dodd	Martinez	

NOT VOTING—5

Johnson	Obama	Voinovich
McCain	Stabenow	

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the President will be notified of the Senate's action.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will return to legislative session.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:35 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. CARPER).

AMERICA COMPETES ACT— Continued

AMENDMENT NO. 929

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will be 2 minutes of debate equally divided on amendment No. 929 offered by the Senator from South Carolina, Mr. DEMINT. Who yields time?

The Senator from New Mexico.

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, I know Senator BAUCUS intended to be here. I don't see him right now. I know the Senator from South Carolina wishes to use his 1 minute. I am informed that Senator BAUCUS will support the amendment and is urging other Senators to do the same.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Carolina.

Mr. DEMINT. Mr. President, I appreciate the support of the majority. This is clearly a bipartisan idea. The underlying bill has in it a study to look at obstacles to innovation. This simply adds to that with a study of our Tax Code to see how it might be obstructing innovation and investment in our country.

It sounds as if we have good support. I encourage all my colleagues, Republicans and Democrats, to vote for the amendment.

I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The question is on agreeing to amendment No. 929. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. JOHNSON) and the Senator from Illinois (Mr. OBAMA) are necessarily absent.

Mr. LOTT. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Arizona (Mr. MCCAIN) and the Senator from Ohio (Mr. VOINOVICH).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 96, nays 0, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 137 Leg.]

YEAS—96

Akaka	Dole	McCaskill
Alexander	Domenici	McConnell
Allard	Dorgan	Menendez
Baucus	Durbin	Mikulski
Bayh	Ensign	Murkowski
Bennett	Enzi	Murray
Biden	Feingold	Nelson (FL)
Bingaman	Feinstein	Nelson (NE)
Bond	Graham	Pryor
Boxer	Grassley	Reed
Brown	Gregg	Reid
Brownback	Hagel	Roberts
Bunning	Harkin	Rockefeller
Burr	Hatch	Salazar
Byrd	Hutchison	Sanders
Cantwell	Inhofe	Schumer
Cardin	Inouye	Sessions
Carper	Isakson	Shelby
Casey	Kennedy	Smith
Chambliss	Kerry	Snowe
Clinton	Klobuchar	Specter
Coburn	Kohl	Stabenow
Cochran	Kyl	Stevens
Coleman	Landrieu	Sununu
Collins	Lautenberg	Tester
Conrad	Leahy	Thomas
Corker	Levin	Thune
Cornyn	Lieberman	Vitter
Craig	Lincoln	Warner
Crapo	Lott	Webb
DeMint	Lugar	Whitehouse
Dodd	Martinez	Wyden

NOT VOTING—4

Johnson	Obama
McCain	Voinovich

The amendment (No. 929) was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, as I understand it, we are operating under a time agreement that has been proposed by the Senate leaders.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is recognized for such time as he wishes to consume.

Mr. KENNEDY. I thank the Chair.

Mr. President, first of all, I commend my friend and colleague, Senator BINGAMAN, as well as Senator ALEXANDER and the group that came together in support of this idea of competitiveness legislation. I think it is one of the most important issues we will consider on the floor of the Senate, and it is something that commands the kind of broad support that it is getting.

What underlines this legislation is a recognition that the United States is competing in a global economy. If we are going to compete in a global economy, we have to make a decision as a nation to the prepare each and every individual American to stand with the winds in a global economy. This legislation says that we are going to equip every man, woman, and child in the United States to be able to deal with the challenges of a global economy, and I think that is a very important national purpose.

Throughout history, this country, when it saw that it was challenged, turned to education to stay competitive. After the Second World War, we needed to build a new, peacetime economy. We passed the G.I. Bill to enable those who served in battle to rebuild their lives at home. For every dollar we invested, the Greatest Generation returned \$7 to our economic growth.

In 1957, we were challenged again. The launch of Sputnik sparked the

Space Age, and we rose to the challenge by passing the National Defense Education Act and inspiring the nation to ensure that the first footprint on the moon was left by an American. We doubled the Federal investment in education. When individuals have their skills uplifted and when they have their skills enhanced, they find out their participation in the economy works a great deal better. They are more productive, they are more useful, they are more creative and more imaginative and able to compete more effectively. This bill is enormously important for all Americans and very important for our country in terms of the whole challenge of globalization.

Secondly, it is enormously important in terms of our national security. This legislation ensures that we are going to encourage those forces that enhance our capability in the areas of math, science and research—all of which are enormously important to make sure we are going to have the best technology for those who are going to serve in the Armed Forces. In the Armed Forces we want the best trained and best led men and women, but we also want the best in technology. This is a competitiveness bill and a national security bill.

I believe it is going to be enormously helpful and valuable in terms of our democratic institutions, in making sure we are going to have men and women in this country who have the ability and commitment to ensure that our democratic institutions are going to function, and function very well, and that we will be able to maintain our leadership in the world.

I, for one, agree with those who believe in each generation, and in each decade, the United States has to fight for its leadership in the world. It is not just going to come automatically. We should no longer think we are going to coast in terms of national and world leadership. We have to win it, and we have to win it every single day. The way to win it is with the kinds of investments that are included in this legislation. So I commend all those who have been a part of this process, and particularly our friends and colleagues, Senator BINGAMAN and Senator ALEXANDER.

To go through very quickly now, after those general comments about why this legislation is so important, if we look at where the United States is: America's 15-year-olds scored below the average in math compared to the youth of other developed nations on a recent international assessment. On the Programme for International Student Assessment, you will see that the U.S. ranks 24th.

This chart indicates that since 1975, the U.S. has dropped from 3rd to 15th place in the production of scientists and engineers.

We are also losing ground in overall high school and college graduation rates. The U.S. has dropped below that average graduation rate for OECD countries. Out of 24 nations, the U.S. ranks 14th, just ahead of Portugal.