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CONGRESS MISSES THE BUS ON GUN CONTROL

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, in less than two weeks, the students of Columbine High School will resume classes and begin their 1999-2000 school year. Since the now infamous Columbine massacre on April 20th, the school has gone through a complete transformation. Sixteen high-definition security cameras have been installed in the school; bullet holes have been patched or covered; the alarm system, which rang for hours during the reign of terror, has been replaced; and new glass windows have been installed to replace broken ones shattered by bullets and home-made bombs. In addition, keyed entry doors have been replaced by high-security electronic doors, a makeshift library has been created out of classrooms, and the school district has hired two additional security guards for protection.

School officials will be making additional changes up until the very day students come back on August 16th, all in an effort to make the Columbine students feel safer when they return to school. Yet, Columbine students were not the only ones affected by last April's shooting. Students and teachers around the nation have lost the sense of safety they deserve to have at school. These students will hardly regain that safety by new landscaping or replaced alarm systems. These students and their families will continue to live in fear until the real issue at hand is addressed: the easy accessibility that young people have to guns.

When school resumes on August 16th at Columbine and around the nation, Congress will have done nothing to prevent young people from purchasing dangerous weapons. Students across the nation will walk into school to begin a new year, while Congress is in a month-long recess, having done nothing to change the same loopholes in the same Federal firearms laws that put the weapons in the hands of minors.

Congress's failure to act is inexcusable. Moderate reforms designed to limit juvenile access to firearms are long overdue. Yet, proponents of even the most modest gun safety legislation have come up against nothing but stonewalling and procedural delays. Sadly, it seems as if action on the juvenile justice bill is only propelled forward by additional tragedies; the Senate bill, having been passed on the day of another school shooting at Heritage High School in Conyers, Georgia, and the final motion to appoint conferees occurring just one day after a mass

shooting in Atlanta. I pray that it does not take yet another mass shooting to move this legislation out of Conference Committee and onto the President's desk.

CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET ACT COMPLIANCE

Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, pursuant to section 313(c) of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974, I submit for the Record a list of material considered to be extraneous under subsections (b)(1)(A), (b)(1)(B), and (b)(1)(E) of section 313. The inclusion or exclusion of material on the following list does not constitute a determination of extraneousness by the Presiding Officer of the Senate.

To the best of my knowledge, the conference agreement for the Financial Freedom Act of 1999, H.R. 2488, contains no material considered to be extraneous under subsections (b)(1)(A), (b)(1)(B), and (b)(1)(E) of section 313 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974.

THE NEW MILLENNIUM CLASSROOMS ACT

Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. President, I rise today to engage in a brief colloquy with the Majority Leader regarding the New Millennium Classrooms Act. Last week, the Abraham-Wyden New Millennium Classrooms Act amendment to the Taxpayer Refund Act of 1999 was cleared on both sides of the aisle and accepted by the full United States Senate. This bill provided tax incentives for businesses to donate both new and used computers to K-12 schools and senior centers. The Senate's approval of this amendment demonstrates our strong commitment to provide school children—especially those children who live in impoverished areas—access to up-to-date computer technology and the Internet. Unfortunately, despite the Senate's strong support for this measure, I understand that it was opposed by the House conferees to the Taxpayer Refund Act.

Mr. LOTT. The Senator from Michigan is correct. The New Millennium Classrooms Act was not included in the House-passed tax bill, and was later omitted from the final tax conference report at the request of House Ways and Means Chairman Bill Archer. I would say that to the Senator from Michigan that your New Millennium Classrooms Act remains a top legislative priority for our Senate Republican High Tech Task Force. Accordingly, I will continue to work with you to find a way to secure final Congressional approval of this important pro-technology, pro-education initiative.

Mr. ABRAHAM. I thank the Majority Leader for his support.

FORMOSAN TERMITES

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, I would like to engage into a colloquy with the distinguished Chairman and the senior senator from Louisiana, Mr. BREAU, about two very important ongoing agriculture research projects relating to Formosan termites, and phytoestrogen research ongoing in Louisiana, which the Appropriations Committee has supported in the past.

For the past two fiscal years, vital funding has been provided to the Southern Regional Research Center in New Orleans to continue "Operation FullStop", which has targeted research and test pilots to find ways to control the Formosan termite. This pest, first introduced into the United States from east Asia in the 1940s has spread like a plague through the Southeast, and its range now extends from Texas to South Carolina. In Louisiana, damage is most severe in New Orleans where the total annual cost of termite damage and treatment is estimated at an astonishing \$217,000,000. Many historic structures in the French Quarter have been devastated, and now as many as 1/3 of the beloved live oaks that shade historic thoroughfares such as St. Charles Avenue are at risk of being lost to termite damage. To help find appropriate controls for Formosan termites in Louisiana and other states where termites are just being found, it is critical for this research to continue.

Additionally, the Southern Regional Research Center in coordination with Tulane and Xavier Universities in New Orleans have merged their complementary expertise in a unique and powerful collaborative on comparative research of the impact of Phytoestrogens on human health. These natural chemicals in soybeans and other plant substances is only starting to receive attention as dietary substances capable of improving human health. In addition, to showing beneficial health effects for the prevention of breast cancer and other health disorders, this research has developed techniques in molecular biology which could lead to applications that control the development of harmful insects. Researchers are on the verge of harnessing this knowledge and applying it to the possible biological amelioration of Formosan termite infestations. Thus, continuation of this research funded by a special Agriculture Research Service grant, is needed to build upon the ongoing program and hopefully find answers to how chemicals found in plant products could be used to replace other toxic pharmaceuticals and pesticides.

Mr. BREAU. Thank you, Senator LANDRIEU. I agree that it is vital that these ongoing agriculture research projects be given much deserved and badly needed attention and consideration by the U.S. Congress. and I join Senator LANDRIEU in my concern about the urgency to control Formosan termite devastation to privately-owned

and public property, to historic preservation, to commerce, and to economic development. Research being conducted at the Agriculture Research Service in New Orleans is vital to controlling the Formosan termite. Formosan termites are unique and are capable of inflicting more damage to more plant species than native termite species. In addition, they have unique biological traits which make them more difficult to control, such as being able to avoid traditional termite controlling toxins by building nests above ground. The fundamental research currently conducted in New Orleans will identify vulnerabilities in termite biology or colony development which can be exploited for the development of new detection methods and environmentally-sound control strategies. The structural foundation of New Orleans and other areas all along the coast will benefit from this research.

Also, the ongoing Phytoestrogen research being conducted by the Southern Regional Research Center in coordination with Tulane and Xavier Universities in New Orleans is an exemplary partnership. The Tulane/Xavier Center for Bioenvironmental Research has one of the leading laboratory efforts in the world for the study of estrogenic chemicals, including Phytoestrogens. USDA's Southern Research Center has 54 years of distinguished service to agriculture and science, making this a productive and sensible collaboration. The ramifications of this partnership will be broad-reaching, aiding not only the prevention and treatment of disease in humans, but also the development of safe biological alternatives to conventional pest control. I join Senator LANDRIEU in looking forward to the continuation of these projects.

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, I appreciate very much the comments from my colleagues from Louisiana. Both of my colleagues can rest assured that I will keep these issues clearly in focus as we deliberate the fiscal year 2000 Agriculture Appropriations bill in conference with the other body. Additionally, I am aware of the many other important past and present research projects ongoing at the Southern Regional Research Center. This is an excellent agriculture research center, and funding for its work should be carefully considered by the conference committee.

INTRODUCTION OF THE U.S. HOLOCAUST ASSETS COMMISSION EXTENSION ACT OF 1999

Mr. SMITH of Oregon. Mr. President and Members of the Senate, next week our Nation will pass an important if unnoticed anniversary—the anniversary of one of the first official notifications we were given of the atrocities of the Holocaust.

On August 8, 1942, Dr. Gerhart Reigner, the World Jewish Congress representative in Geneva, sent a cable to both Rabbi Stephen Wise—the President of the World Jewish Congress—and a British Member of Parliament. In it, Dr. Reigner wrote about “an alarming report” that Hitler was planning that all Jews in countries occupied or controlled by Germany “should after deportation and concentration * * * be exterminated at one blow to resolve once and for all the Jewish question in Europe.” Our Government’s reaction to this news was not our greatest moment during that terrible era.

First, the State Department refused to give the cable to Rabbi Wise. After Rabbi Wise got a copy of the cable from the British, he passed it along to the Undersecretary of State, who asked him not to make the contents public until it could be confirmed. Rabbi Wise didn’t make it public, but he did tell President Roosevelt, members of the cabinet, and Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter about the cable. None of them chose to act publicly on its contents.

Our government finally did acknowledge the report some months later, but the question remains: how many lives could have been saved had we responded to this clear warning of the Holocaust earlier and with more vigor? The questions of how the United States responded to the Holocaust and, specifically, what was the fate of the Holocaust victims’ assets that came into the possession or control of the United States government, is the focus of the Presidential Advisory Commission on Holocaust Assets in the United States, of which I am a member.

This bipartisan Commission—chaired by Edgar M. Bronfman—is composed of 21 individuals, including four Senators, four Members of the House, representatives of the Departments of the Army, Justice, State, and Treasury, the Chairman of the United States Holocaust Memorial Council, and eight private citizens.

The Commission is charged with conducting original research into what happened to the assets of Holocaust victims—including gold, other financial instruments and art and cultural objects—that passed into the possession or control of the Federal government, including the Federal Reserve. We are also to survey the research done by others about what happened to the assets of Holocaust victims that passed into non-Federal hands, including State governments, and report to the President, making recommendations for future actions, whether legislative or administrative.

The Commission was created last year by a unanimous Act of Congress, and has been hard at work since early this year. Perhaps the most important information that the Commission’s preliminary research has uncovered is

the fact that the question of the extent to which assets of Holocaust victims fell into Federal hands is much, much larger than we thought even a year ago, when we first established this Commission.

Last month, at the quarterly meeting of the Commissioners in Washington, we unveiled a “map” of Federal and related offices through which these assets may have flowed. To everyone’s surprise, taking a sample year—1943—we found more than 75 separate entities that may have been involved.

The records of each of these offices must first be located and then scoured—page by page—at the National Archives and other record centers across the United States. In total, we must look at tens of million of pages to complete the historical record of this period.

Furthermore, to our nation’s credit, we are currently declassifying millions of pages of World War II-era information that may shine light on our government’s policies and procedures during that time. But, this salutary effort dramatically increases the work the Commission must do to fulfill the mandate we have given it.

In addition, as the Commission pursues its research, it is discovering new aspects of the story of Holocaust assets that hadn’t previously been understood. The Commission’s research may be unearthing an alarming trend to import into the United States through South America, art and other possessions looted from Holocaust victims. Pursuing these leads will require the review of additional thousands of documents.

The Commission is also finding aspects of previously known incidents that have not been carefully or credibly researched. The ultimate fate of the so-called “Hungarian Gold Trains.”—for example—a set of trains containing the art, gold, and other valuables of Hungarian victims of the Nazis that was detained by the liberating US Army during their dash for Berlin has not been carefully investigated.

In another area of our research, investigators are seeking to piece together the puzzle of foreign-owned intellectual property—some of which may have been owned by victims of Nazi genocide—the rights to which were vested in the Federal government under wartime law.

For all of these reasons and more, I am introducing today with Senators BOXER, DODD and GRAMS the “U.S. Holocaust Assets Commission Extension Act of 1999.” This simple piece of legislation moves to December, 2000, the date of the final report of the Presidential Advisory Commission on Holocaust Assets in the United States, giving our investigators the time to do a professional and credible job on the tasks the congress has assigned to them.