remind my friends across the aisle that the environmental heritage we are all so proud of was forged under Republican stewardship. Our Republican environmental heritage stretches back to Ulysses S. Grant, who established Yellowstone as the first of the crown jewels of our precious national parks. President Theodore Roosevelt set up the National Wildlife Refuge System and promoted the value of conservation.

It was Republicans, under President Nixon, who created the Environmental Protection Agency and enacted the first Clean Air and Clean Water Acts. Under Presidents Ford, Reagan, and Bush we enacted and implemented the majority of the enabling statutes to protect our environment. An important Clean Air Act revision in 1990, which introduced new initiatives like using markets to achieve our goals, has helped to set new directions for the future.

The progress we have made as a nation over the last 25 years deserves praise. We saw problems that needed to be addressed—setting pollution standards to protect public health and dealing with pollution that crosses State and international boundaries. We responded with laws that I was proud to support—laws that addressed those problems in the best way we knew then.

We have learned a lot over these 25 years of environmental experience and progress. America's ability to create innovative ways of dealing with environmental protection and, at the same time, have continued economic growth is the envy of the rest of the world. Now we are at a crossroads about how to make further progress. I want to improve the system so it protects people's health and the environment better with less cost and complexity. I want to put more trust in the ability of all Americans—at all levels of government—and their desire to do the right thing. The old ways won't help much as we face new problems in the future.

During the last 25 years, the States have become very knowledgeable about the best way to deal with most environmental problems. The States have become laboratories of innovation on better ways to deal with many issues of concern: Welfare and health care reform—and environment as well. California, for example, is leading the way in setting up an integrated approach that calls for simpler permits and dealing with air, water, and waste in a coordinated way that goes after the worst problems first. Other States also lead the way.

Wisconsin, for example, has a Brownfields program in place which allows appropriate clean up for urban areas previously written off for development. That makes good sense and shows a sense of the right priorities.

Eighteen States—including Kansas, Texas, Indiana, Colorado, and Oregon—are encouraging their own companies to voluntarily find and fix environmental problems on their own. This is a partnership that works. We should follow that example and encourage rather than punish our communities and businesses for trying to do the right thing.

The States and localities are leading the way in these and other areas. We should use the most appropriate level of Government for the problem at hand. Try the local level first, States next. Try regional solutions when environmental issues involve more than one State. The Federal Government should step back when it can and use its expertise when it is most helpful to the States: To provide scientific or technical help.

Farmers, ranchers, businesspeople, families—all are partners, not villains. We should acknowledge that these people do the right thing every day. Let us measure environmental protection not by the size of a Federal bureaucracy or the number of regulations on the books but by the desire of our people to work together to protect the environmental values that we all treasure.

One of the things I have tried to promote this last year was that we must use good science to set environmental priorities, and then we should tackle the most important problems first. We know we could do better. The Harvard Center for Risk Analysis, for example, estimates that 60,000 lives per year could be saved with the same level of spending if we targeted our money at the worst problems.

It takes leadership to make choices. We need to be wiser about what we go after and at what level that is done.

I want to say one word about individual private property rights, which are so precious that they are protected by the Constitution. Owning property is a right that makes us strong and is a powerful force for the environment. If the Government takes someone's property for a public purpose, that person should be compensated. If we as a society believe that that person's property is needed for an important purpose, let us make that choice as a nation and ensure that we are not diminishing our citizens' rights.

I am proud of what we have done this year on the farm bill. It is the most environmentally sensitive farm bill ever. The conservation title of the farm bill reflects a commonsense approach. The bill continues the Conservation Reserve Program, expands the Wetlands Reserve Program, making this program the Nation's biggest and most successful environmental efforts. In addition, we provided $300 million to restore the Everglades. This was an immediate response to a need identified by the people of Florida.

The farm bill provides a good example of what we can do in other areas: Injecting simplicity, common sense, and flexibility, and lifting the heavy hand of the Government. These goals were also met in the Safe Drinking Water Act and resulted in a bipartisan bill that passed the Senate 99 to 0. We have set the same goals for Superfund reform, to get the lawyers out and get sites cleaned up. Yet today, no Democrats have joined us in this effort. We can get things done when we focus on the goals and not the rhetoric.

Today I received a letter from my Democrat colleagues. I share their environmental goals. But there are better ways to achieve these goals. No one is interested in repealing or weakening environmental protections. Years ago, we accomplished our work by using typewriters. Today our offices are run by computers. Were we rolling back our desire to communicate efficiently by moving from typewriters to computers? I think not. Let's take the same approach on the environment.

That proud tradition and the strong Republican values of personal stewardship, good science, trust in the people, and respect for the States and localities will be used to build a better environmental future for our children.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. DOLE. Mr. President, I now ask that there be a period for the transaction of routine morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 5 minutes each.

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

THE BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, the impression will not go away: The $5 trillion Federal debt stands today as an increasingly grotesque parallel to the energizer bunny that keeps moving and moving and moving on television—precisely in the same manner and to the same extent that the President is allowing the Federal debt to keep going up and up and up into the stratosphere.

A lot of politicians like to talk a good game—''talk'' is the operative word here—about cutting the Federal spending and thereby bringing the Federal debt under control. But watch how they vote on spending bills.

Mr. President, as of the close of business Friday, April 19, 1996, the exact Federal debt stood at $5,100,053,596,414.66 or $19,268.51 per man, woman, and child on a per capita basis.

STATEMENT HONORING THE McWORKMANS ON THEIR 60TH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

Mr. ASHCROFT. Mr. President, families are the cornerstone of America. The data are undeniable: Individuals from strong families contribute to the society. In an era when nearly half of all couples married today will see their union dissolve into divorce, I believe it is both instructive and important to honor those who have taken the commitment of ''til death us do part'' seriously, demonstrating successfully the timeless principles of love, honor, and

fidelity. These characteristics make our country strong.

For these important reasons, I rise today to honor Mr. Robert A. and Mrs. Clara Belle McWorkman of West Plains, MO, who on May 30 will celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary. They understand the meaning of the word ''covenant.'' My wife, Janet, and I look forward to the day we can celebrate a similar milestone. The McWorkmans' commitment to the principles and values of their marriage deserves to be saluted and recognized. I wish them and their family all the best as they celebrate this substantial marker on their journey together.

HONORING THE SHANNONS FOR CELEBRATING THEIR 50TH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

Mr. ASHCROFT. Mr. President, families are the cornerstone of America. The data is undeniable: individuals from strong families contribute to the society. In an era when nearly half of all couples married today will see their union dissolve into divorce, I believe it is both instructive and important to honor those who have taken the commitment of ''till death us do part'' seriously, demonstrating successfully the timeless principles of love, honor, and fidelity. These characteristics make our country strong.

For these important reasons, I rise today to honor Paul and Thelma Shannon of St. Peters, MO, who on June 8, 1996 will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary. My wife, Janet, and I look forward to the day we can celebrate a similar milestone. Paul and Thelma's commitment to the principles and values of their marriage deserves to be saluted and recognized. I wish them and their family all the best as they celebrate this substantial marker on their journey together.

TRIP TO PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA, HONG KONG, AND TAIWAN

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, I recently returned from a trip to the People's Republic of China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan over the April recess in my capacity as chairman of the Senate Subcommittee on East Asian and Pacific Affairs. While I would like at some time to share my observations of that trip with my colleagues, some confusion has arisen in the Asian press over a remark I made on that trip which I feel I need to correct sooner rather than later.

On April 3, I was privileged to have an hour-long meeting with Chinese President Jiang Zemin at Zhongnanhai in Beijing. A central focus of our discussion was the tense situation in the Taiwan Straits and strained relations between the PRC and Taiwan. When the conversation turned toward what President Jiang perceived to be the then-current situation and prospects for a return to a more stable cross-strait relationship, he replied paraphrasing a Chinese saying to illustrate his position. The President said, ''When the wind blows through the pavilion, it means the rains will come,'' or, in Chinese, ''Shan yu yu lai feng man lou di xing shi si hu yi jing guo qu le.'' After a brief pause, he then added, ''But in this case, I think the rain is over.'' I took this to be an encouraging sign that, perhaps with the conclusion of Taiwan's presidential election and the PRC's somewhat worrisome military exercises in the Strait, the situation might be calming down and the two sides might be ready to resume cross-strait contacts through the Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait and the Straits Exchange Foundation, the two semi official bodies set up to handle that relationship.

After visiting other cities in China and then Hong Kong, I spent a day in Taipei, Taiwan, on the way back to the United States. There I met with Foreign Minister Chen and President Lee Teng-hui, both of whom I told of my conversation with President Jiang, and Jiang's statement about the ''rain being over.'' They found the statement to be encouraging, just as I had. In meetings with the Taiwan press during my stay, I made it clear that I was not delivering a message from the government of the PRC to the Government of Taiwan; I had simply relayed the particulars of my conversation with President Jiang to Chen and Lee. This is where the confusion arose.

One of the Taipei newspapers, on hearing that President Jiang had said ''the rain is over'' incorrectly assumed that he had cited another Chinese saying: ''the rain is over and the sun is shinning''—in Chinese ''yu guo tian qing.'' The Taiwan press sometimes tends to shoot first and ask questions later, and other papers were soon picking up the inaccurate statement. As a result, by the next day papers island-wide were reporting that Jiang had made statements that were much more rosy than what was actually said. Not only were the newspaper reports inaccurate, but they missed the entire gist of Jiang's statement. By referring to the saying ''the rain is over * * *'' but leaving off the part of the saying ''* * * the sky is blue,'' President Jiang was making the specific point that while the storm had passed things were still far from ''sunny.''

Anyway, Mr. President, soon other newspapers in Asia were repeating the inaccurate Taiwanese reports. As a result, the Chinese Government, through two newspapers in Hong Kong known to be directed by Beijing—Ming Pao and Wen Wei Po—began to publish articles denying—correctly of course—that Jiang had made the statement attributed to him by me as reported by Taiwan's press.

I became aware of the confusion when I returned to Washington last week, and issued a press release to several Asian papers in an effort to correct the inaccuracies. Although many papers ran articles correctly reflecting the actual comments made by President Jiang, the confusion still persists.

So, Mr. President, I come to the floor today to publicly set the record straight once and for all in the hopes of removing the last vestiges of confusion. I did not travel to Taipei to deliver a specific message from the PRC to Taiwan; I simply reported to the Taiwan Government the details of my conversation with President Jiang. In that conversation, President Jiang said, ''When the wind blows through the pavilion, it means the rains will come. But in this case, I think the rains are over''—no more, no less. I hope this will lay the issue to rest.

THE PASSING OF COMMERCE SECRETARY RON BROWN

Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. President, I rise to note the passing of our Commerce Secretary, Ron Brown, in a plane crash outside Dubrovnik, Bosnia. This tragic accident took with it a vast amount of talent and expertise in the persons of numerous American business people, and specifically in the person of Secretary Brown. A dedicated member of his party and this administration, Secretary Brown fought hard for the ideals and programs in which he believed. His commitment to the Commerce Department he led was shown by his willingness to brave the dangers of Bosnia, business leaders in tow, in pursuit of opportunities to help rebuild that war-torn country.

Secretary Brown also was a committed family man, and I know that his death is a great loss to his wife, his family, his friends, and his neighbors. I extend my condolences to his family in particular and hope that they can find solace in the knowledge of God's grace and in memories of the life they had with Ron Brown.

COMMEMORATING SECRETARY OF COMMERCE RON BROWN

Ms. MOSELEY-BRAUN. Mr. President, it is always painful when death comes too soon. It is even more so when the circumstances are so overwhelmingly dramatic and tragic as the airplane crash in Bosnia that took the life of our Nation's Secretary of Commerce, Ron Brown, and 34 others.

Ron Brown was a dear and personal friend. His loss was compounded by my personal friendship with four other people who died that day. The shock of it still resonates.

His family, and the families of the others who died with him in the service of their country feel the pain most directly. There is no substitute for the love and the loss of a husband, a father, and relative. I want to offer them my sincere condolences and prayers at this sad time.

His colleagues in the Government and in the private sector will miss him and his leadership. Ron Brown not only energized the Democratic Party, but the Department of Commerce as well.