worked side by side with Meissner in the U.S. effort to promote economic development in Northern Ireland and called him ''a good friend.''

In the end, another friend said, Meissner stood out for his love of substance. ''The higher you go in government, the more you come in touch with sharks or political animals who really aren't interested in policy but who want to do favors for people on the Hill, or do what looks good in tomorrow's press stories,'' said Ellen L. Frost, a former trade official now with the Institute for International Economics in Washington. ''And Chuck was never one of those. He cared about sound policy.''

HOLDS AGAINST MILITARY NOMINATIONS

Mr. THURMOND. Mr. President, before we recess to honor all veterans as we observe Memorial Day, I would like to bring a situation, which I find extremely egregious, to the attention of my colleagues.

Today there are 25 military nominations pending before the Senate. These general and flag officers have been on the Executive Calendar and available for confirmation by the Senate since Thursday May 2, 1996. Now, 3 weeks later, they are still not confirmed because one Senator has placed a hold on these nominations.

I do not like anonymous holds for any reason. I can understand a Senator holding a political civilian nominee until a meeting can occur or an agreement can be reached on an issue related to the civilian nominee's duties. In these cases the civilian nominee and the agency would clearly understand who is holding the nomination and the circumstances under which they may reach accommodation. In my view, this type of hold is within the bounds of Senatorial privilege.

Traditionally, military nominations have not been the subject of political holds. In the past, we have seen military nominations held for as long as a year. However, in these cases, the hold was not anonymous and the hold was imposed until an investigation of the activities of the nominee could be completed to the Senator's satisfaction. The 25 general and flag officers being held today are hostages, I believe, to a political debate which is totally unrelated to the qualifications or assignments of the nominees.

Let me review for my colleagues a few of the nominations which are being held. In the Air Force, Lt. Gen. Richard Myers has been nominated for reappointment to lieutenant general and for assignment as the assistant to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; Air Force Lt. Gen. John Jumper has been nominated for reappointment to lieutenant general and for assignment as Deputy Chief of Staff for Plans and Operations for the Air Force; Lt. Gen. Ralph Eberhart has been nominated for reappointment to lieutenant general and for assignment as Commander, U.S. Forces, Japan; Lt. Gen. Daniel Christman has been nominated for reappointment to lieutenant general and for assignment as the Superintendent of the U.S. Military Academy. Mr. President, these are not all of the 35 senior military officers currently under an anonymous hold, but they represent a sample of the effect of this hold.

Why would a Senator deny the Chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff his key assistant, the person who travels with the Secretary of State representing the Chairman in critical foreign policy discussions? Why would a Senator hold an officer selected for assignment as the plans and operations officer for the entire U.S. Air Force. We all understand the global commitments of the Air Force. Why would a Senator deny the chief of staff of the Air Force the ability to fill this very critical billet? Why would a Senator deny our U.S. Forces in Japan a commander or the cadets of the U.S. Military Academy their Superintendent? Is there any political agenda so worthy as to merit such action? I think not.

Mr. President, I abhor this tactic of holding military nominations hostage. I assure my colleagues this is not the way to force me or Senator NUNN to capitulate on a political issue. I strongly believe also that the Department of Defense should not make concessions while military nominees are held. We cannot allow military nominations to become bargaining chips in political disagreements, for local defense contracts or approval of military construction projects. Military personnel are selected for promotion and nominated by the President based on their performance and potential for greater service. These are merit based actions not political decisions. As chairman of the Armed Services Committee, I will do everything possible to keep politics out of the military promotion process.

I urge the Senator who has placed a hold on the military nominations to release them and permit the Senate to confirm these key military leaders so they can continue to serve their country and perform the business of national security.

Mr. NUNN. Mr. President, I would like to take a moment today to discuss the current hold that has been placed on military nominations that are pending on the Senate Calendar.

There are today 25 military nominations pending before the Senate. These are nominations for promotion or appointment of men and women to the flag and general officer grades in each of the military departments. These are people who have each performed in the service of our country with great distinction for over 20 years. They are individuals who will continue to serve at the highest leadership levels in our military.

Some examples of the kinds of nominations that are pending include the appointment of the next Commander of U.S. Air Forces in Japan; the appointment of the next Commander of U.S. Central Command Air Forces; the appointment of the next Superintendent of the U.S. Military Academy; and the promotion of 19 officers in the Navy to the grade of rear admiral.

Each appointment and promotion list has been considered by the Armed Services Committee and the committee has favorably reported each nomination to the Senate recommending confirmation. Some of these nominations were reported to the Senate on May 2; others on May 14. Although some of these nominations have been pending for 3 weeks, the Senate is not acting on them because they have been put on hold by one Senator.

I want to be clear here that I do not object to the long-standing Senate practice that permits a Senator to hold a nomination when there is a problem with a nomination. Even this should only be done when there is sufficient cause. This is certainly not what is happening here.

I strongly object to the tactic of putting a hold on military nominations in order to gain leverage on an issue that is totally unrelated to either the nominees themselves or the positions for which they have been nominated. This is the announced purpose of the Senator's hold.

The Senate has had a strong tradition of not involving our military nominees in the politics of the Nation or in the politics of the Senate. That tradition is being ignored here and I think it is wrong.

There may be some that say that the holding up the nominations of men and women in uniform is an appropriate way of getting the attention of the Department of Defense. In my judgment, it is inappropriate and I would recommend the Pentagon leadership not react to this type of blackmail because, once they do, all military nominations would be at risk.

And anyone that thinks it is appropriate to use military servicemembers as a bargaining chip for whatever reason does a tremendous disservice to those brave men and women who volunteer to serve our Nation in uniform and it does a tremendous disservce to this institution.

How do you tell a patriot who has served almost half his or her life in uniform, frequently in harms way, that they are not being confirmed for promotion because a United States Senator wants to get the attention of someone in the administration?

We are talking here about people nominated to hold the positions of the highest responsibility in our military services at a time when that military is committed in harms way around the globe.

Additionally, the unnecessary delay of military nominations has some very real consequences for the individuals and their families that I want to mention.

The spring and early summer months are traditionally the periods of the highest turnover for military personnel. Every effort is made to effect transfers during the summer months in order to cause as little disruption to families during the school year.

The reassignment of a senior military officer upon Senate confirmation is often the lynchpin of a series of reassignments that moves like a ''daiseychain'' down through the ranks.

Accompanying one 3-star appointment can be a series of nine or ten other moves. So, unnecessarily delaying confirmation has a tremendous effect on a number of officers—and their families—far removed from the nominee. These families have to plan their moves, their travel and leave time. They can not move until the individual at the top moves. And the individuals at the top can not move until they are confirmed. One reason for this is that the Senate does not want nominees to take any actions that presume the outcome of the confirmation process.

Additionally, it is important to note that some of the military nominees pending before the Senate could be promoted immediately if they were confirmed. Therefore, holding up their confirmation is actually taking money out of the pockets of these officers. Surely, we do not want to require a military officer to pay literally for a political disagreement in which he or she has no part.

If a Senator need to get someone's attention; if one Senate committee needs to work out some difference with another Senate committee; if someone needs to gain support for a legislative proposal; there are ways to do this without placing the military service members in the middle and adversely affecting them and their families.

Each day we ask these men and women to make tremendous sacrifices for our Nation. Sacrifices that no one in any other walk of life is asked to make. These men and women have earned the promotions and appointments for which they have been nominated. We do them a disservice when the confirmation process is used as a tactic to gain advantage in the Senate or in other circles.

Mr. President. I ask my colleagues to understand the effect that holding military nominations has on the men and women caught in the middle and to refrain using military nominations as hostages. I would hope that the Senator will release his hold so these nominees can be confirmed prior to the Memorial Day recess.

CHILDREN'S HEALTH: WHAT WORKS?

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, as part of my ongoing commitment to children, I have come to the floor today to draw attention to my efforts to improve the health of American children and young people.

It is clear that many people work hard every day for the well-being of children in this country. However, we all can do—and need to do—so much more. Children's health in my home State of Washington is better overall, including lower infant mortality and better prenatal care. However, immunization rates and child nutrition need improvement.

Across our Nation, over 10 million children are uninsured. One in four children are covered by Medicaid—more than half in working families. And, nearly 200,000 babies were born in 1993 who had no prenatal care, or none until the last 3 months of pregnancy, despite the fact that we know that averting one low birth-weight baby can prevent as much as $37,000 in initial hospital and doctor fees.

Internationally, among industrialized countries, America ranks 16th in the living standards of our poorest children, 18th in the gap between rich and poor children, and 18th in infant mortality.

Certainly, we all can do better for our children's well-being. We know it, and the American people know it.

When I hear from people in Washington State on the topic of children's health, I hear common themes. People from Vancouver to Yakima to Spokane to Tacoma worry about kids not having access to basic health care. They talk about children going to emergency rooms with preventable illnesses and injuries. Parents talk about feeling like they need more and better information to make decisions affecting their child's health.

In response to those concerns, you will continue to see me working in three different areas to improve and protect children's health and well-being:

First, keep effective national standards for health care in place for all children, including those with special needs.

Second, make prevention the centerpiece of our national children's health policy.

Third, increase access to information for families to make the best decisions possible for their children.

There are several ways to do more for children, and not all of them are difficult. One way to help kids is simply to draw attention to the people, programs, and services that are working and doing a good job for children today.

In my home State of Washington, for example, we are helping children to be more healthy in a variety of ways.

In Ellensburg and in Coupeville, through a program now running in four counties that I hope one day goes statewide, parents of young children get two important services that help them make the best decisions for their children.

First, any parent of a child between birth and age 6 gets special mailings and health information sent to their home, including information on well-baby checkups, immunizations, safety, and normal patterns of growth and development. All at no cost to the parents, and all for a total cost of about $10 per child.

Second, parents get reminders and assistance to get the many immunizations their child will need. We know children should be protected from a host of childhood illnesses, from diphtheria and tetanus, and from polio to measles, mumps, and rubella. We also know people are busy, and need reminders, access to affordable vaccines, and lots of information. This program is a good start.

There is also a dental health promotion effort underway in my State. In the past, many dentists' advice to parents has been to bring children in for their first visit about the time they start school, at age 4 or 5. The problem is that many children show up to their first dental visit with decay, gum problems—in many cases so serious that they require dental surgery—because of preventable causes.

The Access to Baby and Child Dentistry [ABDC] program in Spokane, WA, reaches out to families with young children and encourages early dental visits. ABDC dentists remind them to do things like remove baby bottles at the proper age, and not give babies soft drinks or candy bars. In addition, dentists, apply fluoride varnishes and other treatments to baby teeth, and do other clinical procedures to decrease a baby's chances of developing dental problems.

These measum save all of us money in the long run.

Sometimes bringing awareness to a problem is not enough. I mentioned that we need to preserve national standards for children's health. This must happen at the national level.

This Friday, tomorrow, the National Highway Traffic Safety Commission and Prevention magazine will release Prevention's 1996 report on auto safety in America. I hope we all pay attention to their findings. Last year, the report included information on child safety helmets. This year, their report will focus on the things we can do to make automobile travel safer.

Effective national standards for children's health do not have to be some scientific formula. Sometimes it's as easy as retaining a Federal speed limit, or Federal safety regulations. We know that the 55-mile-per-hour speed limit has saved countless children's lives. We know that the automobile industry has made great strides to improve automobile safety. We know air bags improve safety, and that cellular telephone use probably decreases it.

When it comes to the basic safety of our children, it should not depend on which line on a map they just crossed on their family vacation.

As a final note, I want to remind you all that on June 1, the Children's Defense Fund will host Stand for Children, an event in Washington, DC, that will bring Americans together, to show their shared commitment to children. We spend so much time talking about our differences of opinion. We need to respect our opposing view, but get beyond them to common ground and common sense action for children.

I encourage all Americans who can attend this event to do so. It will be a