promising NASA programs in future years. As was the case last year, I still believe there would be a net advantage to terminating this program. However, we are near the point where our investment is too great to not finish the project, and so I will continue to review this program annually. Should I reach the conclusion that we have reached the stage where our investment has matured, I will drop my opposition to the space station.

A pair of amendments concerning the distribution of Veterans Medical Administration resources are also worthy of additional explanation. Senators MCCAIN and GRAHAM introduced an amendment to develop a redistribution plan of Veterans Administration medical care resources. The amendment's purpose is to ensure that veterans have similar access to health care services regardless of where they live. This seems to be the correct way for a efficient government to function and is consistent with our commitment to provide quality medical care to our Nation's veterans. The Senate overwhelmingly adopted this amendment by a vote of 79 to 18.

Senators HARKIN and MOYNIHAN then introduced an amendment that would have prohibited this plan from reducing VA funds spent in any State over the previous year. Given our declining veterans population with shifting medical requirements, I believe it is unreasonable to prohibit the Department of Veterans Affairs from reducing its outlays in certain regions of the country, even if the demand for such services has decreased. The effect of this prohibition would have been large segments of our veterans population being denied medical care. This is not responsible governance, and I therefore joined with 59 other Senators in defeating this amendment 60 to 37.

Another amendment related to health care was offered by the Senator from Oregon, Senator WYDEN, which would prohibit health care plans from restricting or prohibiting certain communications between doctors and their patients. Mr. President, I believe this issue has merit and should be addressed by Congress, but I do not believe the Treasury-Postal Appropriations bill is the appropriate vehicle, especially considering that the amendment had a substantial cost which would have made the entire appropriation bill exceed its budget limits. As such, it was subject to a point of order which I supported.

It is my understanding that Senator WYDEN, Senator KASSEBAUM, and others are working at this moment to construct a bipartisan solution to both the problem raised by Senator WYDEN and the concerns of other Senators and the insurance industry. I support these efforts and look forward to seeing some type of resolution, if not in this Congress then in the next.

Finally, Mr. President, this Senator would like to explain his reasoning in voting to table Senator KERRY's amendment calling for additional expenditures on behalf of a study on the use of taggants in black gun powder and smokeless powder. On this amendment, both the majority and minority managers of the bill as well as the administration objected to the offset used by the Senator from Massachusetts in paying for the study's expanded mandate. Therefore, I chose to support the managers' motion to table. The amendment was successfully tabled by a vote of 57 to 42.●

## EXPLANATION OF VOTES ON THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION BILL

● Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. President, I wish to explain a number of my votes on amendments to the Department of Defense Authorization Bill (S. 1745) passed out of this chamber on July 10, 1996. Specifically, I wish to address my votes on Senator EXON's amendment regarding a general cut in defense spending, Senator WELLSTONE's amendment regarding a shift of defense funds to other budget priorities, and Senator KYL's amendment regarding nuclear weapon testing.

Senator EXON proposed cutting the Defense budget across the board by $4 billion. I opposed this because I believe such a blanket approach is not a responsible way to contain defense spending. Moreover, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Shalikashvili, has stated the he needs $60 billion more than the President requested to modernize weapon systems. America's superior military equipment is aging quickly compared to that of our potential adversaries, and I believe our men and women in uniform should not be placed in harms way without the best equipment possible. By the year 2010, our average fighter will have aged by 218 percent, and will only have 1 year left in its service life limit. Tanks will be almost four times as old as they are today because we are not buying new tanks, and the current stock of tanks will have, on average, passed their designed service life. This is unacceptable. To cut these funds when our fighting men and women need them most is unconscionable, and therefore, I voted against the Exon amendment.

Mr. President, I would also like to address my vote regarding Senator WELLSTONE's amendment on shifting $1.3 billion from defense spending to education programs. I have pledged to support those Federal education programs that work. However, this body has long respected the ''firewall'' between defense spending and other discretionary spending because we realize the common defense is indeed our first priority, and therefore funding for the military should be determined independent of other programs. Thus I voted to table this amendment.

The manner in which we provide for that common defense, however, sometimes is guaranteed as much by the policies we establish as by the money we spend. Although all of us pray that nuclear weapons are never again used, we still find ourselves in a world where we must maintain an effective nuclear deterrent to defend our country and our national security. As an aside, this requirement for nuclear weapons would be drastically reduced if we were to develop an effective ballistic missile defense system for the territory of the United States. Due to the Clinton administration's opposition, however, we remain much more vulnerable to enemy nuclear attack. This requires us to maintain more nuclear weapons than we would otherwise need as a deterrent force. Therefore, as long as we have nuclear weapons, we must also ensure that they are stable and effective to maintain the deterrent influence.

To that end, we must also preserve the ability, at least in the short term, to test these weapons for stability and effectiveness. We may soon have the capability to conduct these tests by computer simulation, but I do not believe we are there yet. The data presented leads me to believe we must maintain the ability to test these weapons, at least for a few more years. As our technological capabilities progress, this may very well change, and I will be willing to reexamine this position. However, for now, I believe it was necessary for our national defense to oppose the motion to table the Kyl amendment allowing continued and limited nuclear testing.

Mr. President, as Members of the Congress, our first constitutional duty is to pass legislation for the raising and support of our Armed Forces, just as the Federal Government's first duty is to provide for the common defense. My votes, I believe, serve that duty and further our national security goals.●

## NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH REVITALIZATION ACT OF 1996

The text of the bill (S. 1897) to amend the Public Health Service Act to revise and extend certain programs relating to the National Institutes of Health, and for other purposes; as passed by the Senate on September 26, 1996, is as follows:

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

**SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; REFERENCES; AND TABLE OF CONTENTS**

(a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the ''National Institutes of Health Revitalization Act of 1996''.

(b) REFERENCES.—Whenever in this Act an amendment is expressed in terms of an amendment to a section or other provision, the reference shall be considered to be made to a section or other provision of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 201 et seq.).

(c) TABLE OF CONTENTS.—The table of contents for this Act is as follows:

Sec. 1. Short title; references; and table of contents

TITLE I—PROVISIONS RELATING TO THE NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH

Sec. 101. Director's discretionary fund.
Sec. 102. Children's vaccine initiative.