

work hard together, this Congress can achieve these goals, and both Republicans and Democrats will deserve a real vote of thanks from the American people.

SENATE DEMOCRATS' LEADERSHIP BILLS

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, I want to commend the Democratic leader for the package of initiatives he has developed on behalf of Senate Democrats. Most of these proposals came out of the 1996 Families First agenda. I was proud to be involved in that attempt to meet the real needs of everyday Americans and I am proud to be a cosponsor of these bills today.

The Education for the 21st Century Act, S. 12, continues Democrats' historic commitment to education. Federal support for education is one of the best investments our Nation can make to ensure a prosperous future. The bill would provide tuition assistance, restore the student loan interest deduction, subsidize State and local bond issues used to finance school construction and repair, fund the Parents as Teachers Program to assist parents who want to help their children become successful readers, and create a technology literacy challenge fund to catalyze and leverage State, local, and private efforts to increase technology literacy among our Nation's schoolchildren.

The Children's Health Coverage Act, S. 13, would help working families purchase private health insurance for their children. Although Senator KENNEDY and I have a bill which uses a subsidy approach rather than a tax credit approach, our bills are fundamentally similar. Both would provide assistance to children 18 and under and pregnant women to purchase private health insurance, both would provide a comprehensive benefits package, and both would provide assistance on a sliding scale to the working parents of uninsured children. I look forward to working with Senator DASCHLE, my fellow Democrats, and my Republican colleagues to pass a bill this year to provide children the health insurance they need and working parents the peace of mind they deserve.

The Retirement Security Act, S. 14, includes a wide range of proposals designed to help Americans prepare for a secure retirement. These would address the fact that too many Americans lack pension coverage by covering more workers under existing plans, creating new retirement savings options for millions of Americans, and encouraging more businesses to establish plans and more employees to participate in them. The bill would improve pension access and coverage, strengthen pension security, promote pension portability, and increase equity for women.

The Youth Violence, Crime and Drug Abuse Control Act, S. 15, would build on the success of the 1994 Crime Act and other crime fighting initiatives en-

acted during President Clinton's first term. I am proud to have been a leader in securing funding in the 1994 Crime Act for placing 100,000 new cops on the streets of America's communities. Thanks to the presence of the newly funded police officers, a fully funded Violence Against Women Act, and the Brady law—which has prevented more than 60,000 felons, fugitives, and stalkers from purchasing handguns, violent crime is lower than at any time since 1990. This bill balances the need to target and punish violent, young criminals with proven drug prevention programs. We would put 25,000 more police officers on the streets by extending the COPS Program for 2 years, and we would extend the Violence Against Women Act to provide shelter for 400,000 more battered women and their children, increase Federal penalties for juveniles by raising the mandatory release age from 21 to 26, increase penalties for gang violence, and reauthorize the Safe and Drug Free Schools Program.

Senator DASCHLE deserves our thanks for his leadership in spotlighting these issues of education, children's health care, retirement security, and youth violence that are so critical to the future of our Nation and to the well-being of the American people. He and his staff are to be commended for drafting these bills to address the issues. I look forward to working with Senator DASCHLE and other Senators on both sides of the aisle to pass legislation to meet these compelling needs.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I thank the Chair.

(The remarks of Mr. DORGAN pertaining to the introduction of legislation are located in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

SERIES OF INITIATIVES

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I intend to discuss at a later time a series of initiatives that Senator DASCHLE discussed in brief form dealing with health care, education, pensions, and a number of other issues, including discussing another issue that is important to me, a piece of legislation that Senator DASCHLE and I and others are introducing dealing with some changes with respect to agricultural programs and family farmers in our country.

I see others are seeking the floor. I yield the floor at this time.

I would like to reserve the remainder of the Democratic time today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. COLLINS). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. DOMENICI. Madam President, what is the parliamentary situation?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The minority has reserved its time. The Senator from new Mexico may seek time.

Mr. DOMENICI. I ask that I be permitted to speak for 10 minutes.

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

THE REPUBLICAN LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

Mr. DOMENICI. Madam President, fellow Senators, I rise to compliment the Republican leader on the announcement today of the first Republican legislative agenda for the 105th Congress. I believe that most Americans would support the principles and the ideas contained in these 10 pieces of legislation. I also believe that within the Senate itself there is a compelling majority that will support these 10 proposals. From my standpoint, I support them all, but I do reserve the right in two or three instances to change some of the things that are in the bills. But in no way does it minimize my admiration of and respect for the leadership for putting these bills forth, and the Republican conference and the hard work they put into coming up with these ideas and these basic premises.

I would like to just run through each one quickly with a few thoughts of my own, and then yield the floor to my friend, the new Senator from Wyoming.

The balanced budget constitutional amendment: I do not think there is any question that that piece of legislation speaks to the wishes of a huge percentage of Americans. I would not be surprised if as many as 70 percent or 75 percent of Americans believe that we ought to build into our institutions a mandate—unless we have a war where we cannot abide by a balanced budget—that we ought to produce a balanced budget every year.

Frankly, I have been working on budgets long enough to on the one hand be pulled by those who say, "Why don't we do it ourselves? Why do we need the force in effect of a constitutional amendment?" I guess the fact that we have all been working on it so long and can't get it done—and that when we look across the industrial nations, all we find is that with the passage of time instead of spending less, all governments spend more; instead of getting their deficits and debts under control there is growing concern, even in Europe, among most of our industrial friends there, that such things as pension plans and deferred obligations are going to bankrupt their countries. We are doing fairly well. But I do not think anybody ought to misconstrue the trend lines in terms of our current deficits to think that it is going to be easy to keep the deficit under control.

In the next couple of weeks the Budget Committee will have a series of hearings to show what the next century is going to look like and what the major problems are, as the President