

is going to reform campaign financing significantly and importantly and in a good way. It will require greater disclosure of independent expenditures. I believe independent expenditures is a sore that is festering and is going to wind up tremendously damaging the body politic.

Unnamed people, with money coming from unknown sources, are running campaign ads viciously attacking candidates. That is wrong. That is really un-American.

The McCain-Feingold legislation will require the FEC to provide advance notice to complying candidates if they have been targeted by these independent expenditures or outside organizations.

McCain-Feingold would restrict contributions from people not eligible to vote in Federal elections. It could ban incumbent use of franked mass mailings in the calendar year of an election.

It would increase disclosure and accountability for those who engage in political advertising. And it would strengthen penalties for willful violations of Federal election law. We must do something to make people feel better about the elections.

Elections are 18 months away. Negative ads are already starting around the country. That is wrong. People who say we need to hold more hearings to determine whether or not McCain-Feingold is a good law, I say let us look at what has happened over the past 10 years. Congress has produced almost 6,800 pages of hearings. There have been 3,361 floor speeches. I guess because of this one, it is 3,362 floor speeches. There have been 1,060 pages of committee reports, 113 Senate votes on campaign finance reform, and one bipartisan Federal commission. Certainly this is enough. We have enough information to act responsibly.

Over the next 2 years, Madam President, Congress will deal with changes to regulations and programs that affect virtually every American, from clean air and water to education programs, matters dealing with crime in the streets, juvenile crime, trying to improve our infrastructure, Medicare, Medicaid, problems dealing with our Nation's elderly. In order to address these concerns credibly, should we not first act to reform the way we are elected? I say yes. I hope that my colleagues join hands in rallying around the McCain-Feingold legislation. It is the best we have to bring debate to the Senate floor and to get something done. I have talked about it for 11 years. It has been a problem even longer than that.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

#### MAINE HIGH SCHOOL PARTICIPATES IN "WE THE PEOPLE" PROGRAM

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, during this past weekend, 14 students from St. Dominic Regional High School in Lewiston, ME, joined with almost 1,200 other high school students from across the Nation to participate in the national finals for the "We the People" competition, a program designed to help students better understand the history of our Constitution and its Bill of Rights, which are the foundations upon which our system of government rests.

The St. Dominic High School students have been representing the State of Maine during this weekend's activities, which will culminate in a national winner being chosen tonight, at an awards banquet here in Washington. The St. Dominic's team spent a considerable amount of time and energy reaching the national finals this weekend by winning various competitions in Maine in order to earn the honor of representing our State.

The 14 members of our State's outstanding team, who should be individually acknowledged for their efforts in this undertaking, are:

Robyn Adair, Michael Beam, Julie Blanchette, Nicole Bouttenot, Rachel Bouttenot, Martin Bruno, Derek Coulombe, Emma Dore-Hark, Jennifer Elliott, Jonathan LaBonte, Kendra LaRoche, Kathryn Mailhot, Michael Theriault, and Matthew Walton.

Of course, in addition to these outstanding students, I want to acknowledge and recognize the hard work of their teacher, Rosanne Ducey, who deserves her fair share of the credit for the team's success as well. The "We the People" program coordinator for Maine, Pamela Beal, has also contributed a significant amount of her time and effort to help the St. Dominic team reach the national finals.

The "We the People" program, which is administered by the Center for Civic Education, is the most in-depth educational program in the country developed specifically to educate high school students about the U.S. Constitution. This past weekend's 3-day national competition re-creates a public hearing in which the student's oral presentations are judged on the basis of their knowledge of constitutional principles and their ability to apply them to historical and contemporary issues.

The "We the People" program has been operating for 10 years now. Since its origination, millions of students nationwide have participated in this program at either the elementary, middle, and/or high school level. This program provides an excellent opportunity for students to gain an informed perspective on the significance of the U.S. Constitution and its place in our history and our lives.

Mr. President, I'm pleased to be able to recognize the valuable contribution that the St. Dominic Regional High School team has made to the success of

the "We the People" program, and I wish these students and their teachers the very best of luck. I am proud of their accomplishments.

#### THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business Friday, April 25, 1997, the Federal debt stood at \$5,345,392,363,906.29. (Five trillion, three hundred forty-five billion, three hundred ninety-two million, three hundred sixty-three thousand, nine hundred six dollars and twenty-nine cents)

Twenty-five years ago, April 25, 1972, the federal debt stood at \$428,301,000,000 (Four hundred twenty-eight billion, three hundred one million) which reflects a debt increase of nearly \$5 trillion—\$4,917,091,363,906.29 (Four trillion, nine hundred seventeen billion, ninety-one million, three hundred sixty-three thousand and, nine hundred six dollars and twenty-nine cents) during the past 25 years.

#### CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is now closed.

#### PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR

Mr. ABRAHAM. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that Elizabeth Kessler, a member of my staff, be granted privilege of the floor for the period of time during which the Volunteer Protection Act is discussed.

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

#### VOLUNTEER PROTECTION ACT OF 1997—MOTION TO PROCEED

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will now resume consideration of the motion to proceed to S. 543, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 543) to provide certain protections to volunteers, nonprofit organizations, and governmental entities in lawsuits based on the activities of volunteers.

The Senate resumed consideration of the motion to proceed.

Mr. ABRAHAM. Madam President, this week in Philadelphia, President Clinton is joining former Presidents Bush and Ford, along with former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Colin Powell at a summit to promote voluntarism.

I commend any and all efforts to increase charitable activity on the part of Americans. And I find it extremely fitting that this summit is being held in the City of Brotherly Love because charitable activity does more even than providing help and counseling to those in need. Charitable activity helps all Americans by promoting habits and appreciation of benevolent actions—actions aimed at helping those in need because it is the right thing to do.