

Michigan has been greatly affected by Lee's energetic guidance and leadership. In the intervening years between 1956 and the present, Lee has been a driving force for the Republican Party. From community elections to those elections national in scope, Lee always offered great wisdom and foresight. Throughout his life, Lee has shown tremendous concern for his fellow citizens and was always a willing volunteer for any task. I am proud to have had the chance to work beside him.

Mr. President, I am extremely honored to have this opportunity to thank him for his many years of service and friendship. He is a very dear friend and my thoughts and prayers go out to him, his wife Nancy, and the rest of his family.●

**TRIBUTE TO WESTERN COVENTRY SCHOOL, 1997 U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION BLUE RIBBON SCHOOL**

● Mr. REED. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize the achievement of Western Coventry School of Coventry, Rhode Island, which was honored earlier this year as a U.S. Department of Education Blue Ribbon School.

It is a highly regarded distinction to be named a Blue Ribbon School. Through an intensive selection process beginning at the state level and continuing through a federal Review Panel of 100 top educators, many of the very best public and private schools in the nation are identified as deserving of this honor. These schools are particularly effective in meeting local, state, and national goals. However, this honor signifies not just who is best, but what works in educating today's children.

Now, more than ever, it is important that we make every effort to reach out to students, that we truly engage and challenge them, and that we make their education come alive. At the Western Coventry School, a kindergarten through sixth grade school, parent-teacher cooperation, through an award winning Parent Teacher Association (PTA), has helped to improve the quality of education. The school has instituted a mentoring program for at-risk youth and has made concerted efforts to ensure that students with special needs receive the assistance they require. In addition, teachers have taken an aggressive role in developing

new approaches to teaching reading and math.

Mr. President, Western Coventry School is dedicated to the highest standards. It is a school committed to a process of continuous improvement with a focus on high student achievement. Most importantly, Western Coventry recognizes the value of the larger community and seeks its support and involvement. This school and community are making a huge difference in the lives of its students.

Mr. President, the Blue Ribbon School initiative shows us the very best we can do for students and the techniques that can be replicated in every school to help all students succeed. I am proud to say that in Rhode Island we can look to a school like the Western Coventry School. Under the leadership of its principal, Barry Ricci, its capable faculty, and its involved parents, Western Coventry School will continue to be a shining example for years to come.●

**HOW NOT TO BUILD CONFIDENCE IN GOVERNMENT STATISTICS**

● Mr. MOYNIHAN. Mr. President, on October 16, following the release of monthly price data by the Bureau of Labor Statistics [BLS], the Social Security Administration announced a 2.1-percent cost of living adjustment [COLA] for Social Security and other Government programs. Yet a week earlier, the Social Security Administration circulated a table which indicated that the benefit increase would be 2.7 percent.

How could this happen? Simple. The Administration, as I have noted on numerous occasions, insisted on using an outdated economic forecast so as to obscure the fact that the budget was approaching balance in fiscal year 1997 in the absence of a budget agreement. While that budget legislation was pending in Congress last summer, it was feared that if the economic outlook was too favorable, pressure for the budget bills would decrease and agreement would not be reached. And so the Social Security Actuaries had no recourse other than to use the official forecast when presenting data on the actuarial status of the trust funds.

Here is why the numbers were, to put it mildly, misleading. The Administration notes that its mid-session budget review—released almost 2 months late

on September 5—is based on economic projections finalized in early June. But even by then it should have been clear what was happening to prices. By early June 1997, data for 8 months of the benefit computation period, August 1996–April 1997, indicated that, on an annual basis, CPI-W had increased by 2.4 percent. To increase by 2.7 percent for the full year would require, on an annual basis, a 3.2-percent increase in CPI-W for the remaining 4 months, April 1997–August 1997, of the computation period. Put another way the Administration was predicting a one-third increase in the inflation rate. Yet, on an annual basis, CPI-W increased by only 1.5 percent during these 4 months. That is, the inflation rate actually declined by almost 40 percent.

In short, by the spring it should have been clear that the benefit increase would be less than 2.7 percent. And by late summer it was virtually certain that the increase would be 2.0 to 2.2 percent, but nowhere near 2.7 percent.

What does this mean to the average beneficiary now receiving a monthly benefit of \$749? Instead of a \$20 monthly benefit increase—2.7 percent of \$749—the benefit increase will be about \$16. Fortunately, few if any Members of Congress rushed out in early October and announced to constituents, based on the Administration's estimates, that they would receive an expected 2.7-percent benefit increase.

The Advisory Commission to Study the Consumer Price Index—the Boskin Commission—concluded that the Consumer Price Index [CPI] overstates changes in the cost of living by about 1.1 percentage points. And many other researchers concur with the findings of the Boskin Commission. The American Association of Retired Persons [AARP], and others, have argued that the only way to keep politics out of the process is to let the BLS do it. Such critics should be mindful that accurate statistics include timely and accurate projections. By late September or early October of each year Social Security beneficiaries should be able to rely on their Government to provide reliable projections of upcoming benefit increases.

Mr. President, I ask that a table prepared by the Social Security Administration, Office of the Actuary, on October 7, 1997, be printed in the RECORD.

The table follows:

TABLE 1.—ECONOMIC ASSUMPTIONS UNDERLYING THE MID-SESSION REVIEW OF THE PRESIDENT'S FISCAL YEAR 1998 BUDGET  
(In percent)

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Change in real GDP .....	2.4	3.5	2.0	2.0	2.1	2.4	2.4	2.4	2.4	2.4	2.4	2.4
Civilian unemployment rate .....	5.4	5.0	5.2	5.4	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5
Change in average annual CPI .....	2.9	2.7	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5
Change in average covered wage .....	4.3	4.6	3.2	3.8	3.9	3.7	3.6	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.9	3.9
Real wage differential .....	1.4	2.0	0.7	1.2	1.4	1.2	1.1	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.4	1.4
Benefit increase .....	2.9	2.7	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5
Average annual interest rate .....	6.6	6.7	6.1	5.7	5.6	5.4	5.4	5.4	5.4	5.4	5.4	5.4

Note: Social Security Administration, Office of the Chief Actuary, October 7, 1997.●