should be noted that any replacement or new member added to a standing committee should be done so in accordance with the provisions of section 15(b)(1).

Even though the requirements of section 15(b) of the bill are effective on the date of enactment, NAS has indicated in a letter that they would make reasonable and practicable efforts, to the fullest extent, to apply those requirements to committees that began work as part of an agency agreement prior to the date of enactment. I ask unanimous consent that the NAS letter be made part of the RECORD at the conclusion of my remarks.

Section 15(b) provides that public notice be given for a number of committee activities. Traditionally, under FACA, public notice constitutes notice in the Federal Register. However, FACA was written over 20 years ago prior to advent of the information technology revolution. Therefore, I believe that public notice under this bill could include the use of the Internet, including notice and information timely posted on their home pages, by the NAS and NAPA as a means to satisfy the bill's public notice procedures.

Regarding the NAS, I understand that they will establish a reading room, free and open to the general public, to make available information required to be made public under section 15(b). I concur with this approach. Furthermore, the legislation provides that a reasonable charge may be imposed by the NAS for distribution of written materials. I believe that this charge should be as minimal as possible and should not exceed the costs of copying, paper, printing, and mailing—if needed. My preference would be that future agreements between the Federal agencies and NAS include sufficient funds for copying and distribution of relevant materials so that there would be no charge to the public, particularly if the request for written materials is a narrow or limited one. I would also encourage both academies to use the Internet here as well.

I also want to clarify that the provisions of this bill do not apply to NAS or NAPA committees that are self-funded or funded through a non-Federal source. However, if Federal funds are added to such a committee pursuant to an agreement with an agency and the respective academy, then the committee must comply with the provisions of this bill.

Finally, Federal agencies should take note that we have vested discretion to the NAS and NAPA regarding implementation of the requirements of section 15(b). Agencies should not seek to manage or control the specific procedures each academy will adopt in order to comply with the requirements of the bill. A certification from the academies at the time the final report is to be submitted shall suffice. Agencies should not interpret section 15(b)(1) as implying that the conflict of interest provisions under the Ethics in Government Act are the de facto standard to be employed. That act requires extensive financial disclosure and other requirements that are not appropriate in this instance.

I ask unanimous consent that the text of a letter from the National Academy of Sciences be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the letter was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES,
OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT,
Washington, DC, November 9, 1997.

Hon. JOHN GLENN,
Ranking Minority Member, Committee on Governmental Affairs, U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR GLENN: I am writing on behalf of the National Academy of Sciences to explain how the Academy intends to apply the requirements of the Federal Advisory Committee Act of 1997 to Academy committees that are currently working on contracts or agreements with federal agencies.

Under the Act, the Academy is not required to apply the procedures of section 15 to committees that are currently underway. This makes sense, because the appointment provisions of section 15 could not be applied retroactively to committees whose members have already been appointed. There are, however, some provisions of section 15 that depending upon the stage of a committee's work could be reasonably applied to ongoing committees. For example, if a committee has not yet concluded its data gathering process, the requirement that data gathering meetings be open to the public could be followed by the committee.

On behalf of the Academy, you have my assurance that the Academy will apply the procedures set forth in section 15 to committees that are currently underway to the fullest extent that is reasonable and practicable.

Sincerely,

BRUCE ALBERTS,
President, National Academy of Sciences.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the bill be considered read a third time and passed, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table and any statements related to the bill be printed in the RECORD.

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

The bill (H.R. 2977) was passed.

OCEAN AND COASTAL RESEARCH REVITALIZATION ACT OF 1997

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I now ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of Calendar No. 287, S. 927.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 927) to reauthorize the Sea Grant Program.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection to the immediate consideration of the bill?

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

AMENDMENT NO. 1636

(Purpose: To reauthorize the Sea Grant Program)

Mr. LOTT. Senator SNOWE has an amendment at the desk, and I ask for its consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Mississippi [Mr. LOTT], for Ms. SNOWE, proposes an amendment numbered 1636.

(The text of the amendment is printed in today's RECORD under ''Amendments Submitted.'')

Ms. SNOWE. Mr. President, I am offering a manager's amendment with Senator HOLLINGS and Senator CHAFEE to S. 1213, the Oceans Act of 1997. The year 1998 has been declared the International Year of the Ocean by the United Nations, and around the world scientists, governments, nongovernmental organizations, and private citizens are preparing activities that recognize the importance of the oceans to all of humanity as well as the planet. Passage of the Oceans Act today would serve as a very fitting contribution to the Year of the Ocean, signifying that the United States is at the forefront of ocean policy, and that we as a nation are continuing to strive for the conservation and sustainable use of our ocean resources.

S. 1213, which I cosponsored with Senators HOLLINGS, MCCAIN, KERRY, STEVENS, and others is intended to address current and future problems related to the oceans, coasts, and Great Lakes, and to ensure that we have a national oceans policy capable of meeting these challenges.

The bill would create a commission to analyze the full range of ocean policy issues facing the Nation, and the way in which the Federal Government is currently responding to them through its agencies and programs. After completing its analysis, the commission would provide recommendations to the President and the Congress on the development of a comprehensive, cost-effective policy to address these issues.

It also requires the President to create an interagency council to help improve coordination and cooperation, and eliminate duplication of effort among Federal agencies.

This legislation is based on a law enacted in 1966 which created a similar commission known as the Stratton Commission. That commission led to the creation of NOAA in 1970, and it helped to shape our public policies on these issues in the succeeding years. But the times have changed over the past 30 years, and the problems that we face in the marine environment have changed as well.

The manager's amendment which I am proposing today embodies virtually all of S. 1213 are reported by the Commerce Committee, but it also addresses the concerns of some Senators about the establishment of the interagency National Oceans Council. Over the last few days, I have worked closely with Senators CHAFEE, HOLLINGS, and MCCAIN on modifications to help ensure that the Council has an appropriate role within the administration. It is intended to assist the commission

with its work, providing information from the appropriate Federal agencies as necessary, and to help the President implement the national ocean policy that he is charged with developing under the bill. The changes that we have agreed to and that are contained in the manager's amendment clarify the role of the Council, and establish a sunset provision requiring the Council to disband 1 year after the commission issues its report. The amendment also makes clear that the Council cannot supersede any other existing administration coordination mechanisms, or interfere with ongoing Federal activities under existing law.

Mr. President, this is a very good bipartisan bill that is supported by the leaders of both the Commerce and Environment and Public Works Committees. It will give the United States very important guidance on how to prepare for the ocean-related challenges that will face the Nation in the 21st century. I urge my colleagues to support the amendment and the bill as amended.

Mr. HOLLINGS. Mr. President, I rise in support of S. 927, a bill to reauthorize the National Sea Grant College Program. First, I offer my thanks to Senator SNOWE, the primary sponsor of the bill.

Sea Grant is a results-oriented program that builds bridges among Government, academia, and industry, putting information and technology from research laboratories into the hands of the people who can really use it. The National Sea Grant Program serves as a successful model for multidisciplinary research directed at scientific advancement and economic development. Sea Grant has improved the competitiveness of the Nation's coastal and marine economy by increasing the pool of skilled manpower, fostering scientific achievement, facilitating technology transfer, and educating the public on critical resource and environmental issues.

Mr. President, the 1966 Stratton Commission outlined a seminal vision for the benefits this Nation could derive from the oceans and coasts. The Sea Grant Program has played a vital part in realizing that vision. Today, Sea Grant researchers are examining important problems affecting our marine resources. This research is not just being put on a shelf. It is being used to improve aquaculture, market new technologies, develop pharmaceuticals, educate our young people, manage fisheries, and much more. This legislation, S. 927, will carry Sea Grant into its next 30 years by strengthening the Sea Grant Program, improving the procedures by which it operates, clarifying the respective roles of the Federal Government and the universities that participate in the program, and reducing administrative costs. I urge all of my colleagues to join me in supporting this important program and the passage of the bill.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I rise today in support of S. 927, the Ocean and Coastal Research Revitalization Act of 1997. Last year, Congress passed the National Invasive Species Act. S. 927 will enable colleges and universities across the country to address the goals of the National Invasive Species Act and will foster research on our marine and coastal resources. My amendment to include Lake Champlain as one of the Great lakes will allow Vermont colleges and universities to join the Sea Grant College Program and increase research on the many environmental threats to Lake Champlain.

A recent study shows that the zebra mussels have spread from 4 States in 1988 to 20 States this year. The zebra mussel is a prime example of what can happen when an exotic species is introduced into an environment where it has no natural predators. The zebra mussel, having hitchhiked over from Europe, is invading the far reaches of Lake Champlain at an alarming rate.

We Vermonters have come to think of it as great for many reasons though: Lake Champlain is vital both environmentally and economically to Vermont. Lake Champlain supports a watershed of over 8,200 square miles and an economy of over $9 billion in the region. In addition, the importance of Lake Champlain spreads throughout the Northeast, since residents of New England and the mid-Atlantic States cherish the lake and its resources for its recreational, ecological, and scenic values. Although Vermonters have always considered Lake Champlain the sixth Great Lake, this legislation will now officially recognize Lake Champlain as the sixth Great Lake under the Sea Grant Program.

This designation will allow colleges and universities in the Lake Champlain basin to become a Sea Grant college, enabling them to conduct vital research on the many invasive species threatening Lake Champlain, including zebra mussels, sea lampreys, Eurasian watermilfoil, and water chestnut. Inclusion in the National Sea Grant College Program would allow Vermont schools to focus greater attention on invasive species, but also would help Vermont and New York implement a number of the priorities identified in the Lake Champlain Basin Plan signed by our Governors this winter.

As the economic importance of the lake and the population of the Champlain Valley has grown, so have the environmental problems of Lake Champlain. One of the main environmental issues facing the lake is controlling pollution that flows into the lake. In particular, increases in the levels of phosphorus have turned parts of Lake Champlain green with algae. Runoff from farms and urban streets and treated water from sewage plants have caused this increase.

Historically, scientific efforts on Lake Champlain have lagged behind other regions with coastal waters of national significance. Although the University of Vermont was one of the original land grant colleges, it did not receive Sea Grant college status during the initial selections because the Sea Grant Program has been focused on areas with marine research needs. Since that time, several new Sea Grant designations were made to address critical issues facing the Great Lakes.

Lake Champlain plays an important role in the Great Lakes system, connected by hydrologic, geologic, and biological origins. The issues facing Lake Champlain represent the emerging issues facing the Great Lakes, such as nutrient enrichment, toxic contamination, habitat destruction, and fisheries issues. Allowing Vermont to participate in the Sea Grant Program would provide an opportunity for the State's scientists to compete for badly needed Federal dollars to support lake research.

The University of Vermont and other Vermont colleges are ideally situated to attain Sea Grant college status to work on Lake Champlain research. These researchers have been participating in lake research projects over the past several years, pulling together limited funding from numerous sources. Designation as a Sea Grant college will remedy this situation. Vermont will be able to improve the long-term water quality and biological monitoring on Lake Champlain. This monitoring is critical to determine the success of management actions outlined in the Lake Champlain Basin Plan. The Sea Grant Program would enable Vermont to track toxic substances in the water, sediment, air and biota and invasive species.

I want to thank my colleague from Maine, Senator SNOWE, and her staff for their assistance in increasing attention to the environmental issues in Lake Champlain.

Mr. BREAUX. Mr. President, this legislation reflects an effort to reach a compromise within the international ocean shipping industry. It reflects a middle ground among the somewhat dissimilar interests of the ocean carriers and shippers and shipping intermediaries, as well as the interests of U.S. ports and post-related labor interests such as longshoremen and truckers. I have worked with Senators HUTCHISON, LOTT, and GORTON to craft a compromise allowing us to move forward with legislation. I had hoped to be able to move forward with floor consideration before we adjourn, but it appears now that we ran out of time on this bill. I look forward to taking this bill up early in the next session of Congress. It has been very difficult to balance the competing considerations affected by this bill. In fact, I would liken it to squeezing Jell-O, you push in one direction and objections would ooze out in the other direction. However, I feel certain that we are close to achieving a workable agreement that all parties can support.

It is safe to say that our ocean shipping industry affects all of us in the United States since 96 percent of our international trade is carried by ships,

but very few of us fully understand the ocean shipping industry. International ocean shipping is a half-a-trillion-dollar annual industry that is inextricably linked to our fortunes in international trade. It is a unique industry, in that international maritime trade is regulated by more than just the policies of the United States. In fact, it is regulated by every nation capable of accepting vessels that are navigated on the seven seas. It is a complex industry to understand because of the multinational nature of trade, and its regulation is different from any of our domestic transportation industries such as trucking, rail, or aviation.

The ocean shipping industry provides the most open and pure form of trade in international transportation. For instance, trucks and railroads are only allowed to operate on a domestic basis, and foreign trucks and railroads are required to stop at border locations, with cargo for points further inland transported by U.S. firms. International aviation is subject to restrictions imposed and a result of bilateral trade agreements, that is, foreign airlines can only come into the United States if bilateral trade agreements provide access into the United States. However, international maritime trade is not restricted at all, and treaties of friendship, commerce, and navigation guarantee the right of vessels from anywhere in the world to deliver cargo to any point in the United States that is capable of accommodating the navigation of foreign vessels.

The Federal Maritime Commission [FMC] is charged with regulating the international ocean shipping liner industry. The ocean shipping liner industry consists of those vessels that provide regularly scheduled services to U.S. ports from points abroad. In large part, the trade consists of containerized cargo that is capable of international movement. The FMC does not regulate the practices of ocean shipping vessels that are not on regularly scheduled services, such as vessels chartered to carry oil, chemicals, bulk grain, or coal carriers. One might ask why regulate the ocean liner industry, and not the bulk shipping industry? The answer is that the ocean liner industry enjoys a worldwide exemption from the application of U.S. antitrust laws and foreign competition policies. Also, the ocean liner industry is required to provide a system of common carriage, that is, our law requires carriers to provide service to any importer or exporter on a fair, and nondiscriminatory basis.

The international ocean shipping liner industry is not a healthy industry. In general, it is riddled with trade-distorting practices, chronic overcapacity, and fiercely competitive carriers. In fact, rates have plunged in the transpacific trade to the degree that importers and exporters are expressing concerns about the overall health of the shipping industry. The primary cause of liner shipping overcapacity is the presence of policies designed to promote national-flag carriers and also to ensure strong shipbuilding capacity in the interest of national security. These policies which are not necessarily economically effective include subsidies to purchase ships and to operate ships, tax advantages to lower costs, cargo reservation schemes, and national control of shipyards and shipping companies. A prime example of policies that promote and subsidize a national-flag carrier is one of the largest shipping companies in the world, the China Overseas Shipping Company [COSCO]. It is operated by the Government of China, much in the way the United States Government controls the Navy and is not constrained by considerations that plague private sector companies.

Historically, ocean shipping liner companies attempted to combat rate wars resulting from overcapacity by establishing shipping conferences to coordinate the practices and pricing policies of liner shipping companies. The first shipping conference was established in 1875, but it was not until 1916 that the U.S. Government reviewed the conference system. The Alexander Committee—named after the then-chairman of the House Committee on Merchant Marine and Fisheries—recommended continuing the conference system in order to avoid ruinous rate wars and trade instability, but also determined that conference practices should be regulated to ensure that their practices did not adversely impact shippers. All other maritime nations allow shipping conferences to exist without the constraints of antitrust or competition laws, and presently no nation is considering changes to their shipping regulatory policies.

In the past, U.S. efforts to apply antitrust principles to the ocean shipping liner industry were met with great difficulty. Understandably, foreign governments objected to applying U.S. antitrust laws instead of their own laws on competition policy to their shipping companies. Many nations have enacted blocking statutes to expressly prevent the application of U.S. antitrust laws to the practices of their shipping companies. As a result of these blocking statutes, U.S. antitrust laws would only be able to reach U.S. companies and would destroy their ability to compete with foreign companies. With the difficulties in applying our antitrust laws, U.S. ocean shipping policy has endeavored to regulate ocean shipping practices to ensure that the grant of antitrust immunity is not abused and that our regulatory structure does not contradict the regulatory practices of foreign nations.

The current regulatory statute that governs the practices of the ocean liner shipping industry is the Shipping Act of 1984. The Shipping Act of 1984 was enacted in response to changing trends in the ocean shipping industry. The advent of intermodalism and containerization of cargo drastically changed the face of ocean shipping, and nearly all liner operations are now containerized. Prior to the Shipping Act of 1984, uncertainty existed as to whether intermodal agreements were within the scope of antitrust immunity granted to carriers. In addition, carrier agreements were subject to lengthy regulatory scrutiny under a public interest-type of standard. Dissatisfaction with the regulatory structure led to hearings and legislative review in the late 1970's and early 1980's. In the wake of passage of legislation deregulating the trucking and railroad industry, deregulation of the ocean shipping industry was accomplished with the enactment of the Shipping Act of 1984.

The Shipping Act of 1984 continues antitrust immunity for agreements unless the FMC seeks an injunction against any agreement it finds ''is likely, by a reduction of competition, to produce an unreasonable reduction in transportation service or an unreasonable increase in transportation cost.'' The act also clarifies that agreements can be filed covering intermodal movements, thus allowing ocean carriers to more fully coordinate ocean shipping services with shore-side services and surface transportation.

The Shipping Act of 1984 attempts to harmonize the twin objectives of facilitating an efficient ocean transportation system while controlling the potential abuses and disadvantages inherent in the conference system. The Act maintains the requirement that all carriers publish tariffs and provide rates and services to all shippers without unjust discrimination, thus continuing the obligations of common carriage. In order to provide shippers with a means of limiting conference power, the Shipping Act of 1984 made three major changes: First, it allowed shippers to utilize service contracts, but required the essential terms of the contract to be filed and allowed similarly situated shippers the right to enter similar contracts; second, it allowed shippers the right to set up shippers associations, in order to allow collective cargo interests to negotiate service contracts; and third, it mandated that all conference carriers had the right to act independently of the conference in pricing or service options upon 10 days' notice to the conference.

Amendments to the Merchant Marine Act, 1920, and the passage of the Foreign Shipping Practices Act of 1988, strengthened the FMC's oversight of foreign shipping practices and the practices of foreign governments that adversely impact conditions facing U.S. carriers and shippers in foreign trade. The FMC effectively utilized its trade authorities to challenge restrictive port practices in Japan, and after a tense showdown convinced the Japanese to alter their practices that restrict the opportunity of carriers to operate their own marine terminals. The changes that will be required to be implemented under this agreement will

save consumers of imports and exporters trading to Japan, millions of dollars, and the FMC deserves praise for hanging tough in what was undeniably a tense situation.

While we were not able to address all concerns about our new ocean shipping deregulation proposal I would like to elaborate on the progress that has been made toward ultimate Senate passage of legislation. I would also like to thank Senators HUTCHISON, LOTT and GORTON for their efforts on this bill. Additionally, the following staffers spent many hours meeting with the affected members of the shipping public and listening to their concerns about our proposal and I would like to personally thank Jim Sartucci and Carl Bentzel of the Commerce Committee staff, Carl Biersack of Senator LOTT's staff, Jeanne Bumpus of Senator GORTON's staff, Amy Henderson of Senator HUTCHISON's staff as well as my own staffers, Mark Ashby and Paul DeVeau.

S. 414, the Ocean Shipping Reform Act, and the proposed amendment to the committee reported bill, attempt to balance the competing interests of those affected by international ocean shipping practices. One of the major obstacles to change in this area was the need to provide additional service contract flexibility and confidentiality, while balancing the need to continue oversight of contract practices to ensure against anti-competitive practices immunized from our antitrust laws. I think the contracting proposal embodied in S. 414 adequately balances these competing considerations. The bill transfers the requirements of providing service and price information to the private sector, and will allow the private sector to perform functions that had heretofore been provided by the Government. The bill broadens the authority of the FMC to provide statutory exemptions, and reforms the licensing and bonding requirements for ocean shipping intermediaries.

Importantly, the bill does not change the structure of the Federal Maritime Commission. The FMC is a small agency with a annual budget of about $14 million. When you subtract penalties and fines collected over the past 7 years, the annual cost of agency operations is less than $7 million. All told, the agency is a bargain to the U.S. taxpayer as it oversees the shipping practices of over $500 billion in maritime trade. The U.S. public accrues an added benefit when the FMC is able to break down trade barriers that cost importers and exporters millions in additional costs, as recently occurred when the FMC challenged restrictive Japanese port practices.

The FMC is an independent regulatory agency that is not accountable to the direction of the administration. Independence allows the FMC to maintain a more aggressive and objective posture when it comes to the consideration of eliminating foreign trade barriers.

S. 414 also provides some additional protection to longshoremen who work at U.S. ports. The concerns expressed by U.S. ports and port-related labor interests revolved around reductions in the transparency afforded to shipping contracts, and the potential abuse that could occur as a result of carrier antitrust immune contract actions. In order to address the concerns of longshoremen who have contracts for longshore and stevedoring services, S. 414 sets up a mechanism to allow the longshoremen to request information relevant to the enforcement of collective bargaining agreements.

It is my feeling that we have before us a package of needed shipping reforms that will allow us to move ahead, and I look forward to passing this bill in the next session of Congress.

Mr. LOTT. I ask unanimous consent that the amendment be agreed to, the bill be considered read a third time and passed, as amended, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table and that any statements related to the bill be printed in the RECORD.

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

The amendment (No. 1636) was agreed to.

The bill (S. 927), as amended, was passed.

DOCUMENTATION OF THE VESSEL ''PRINCE NOVA''

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Commerce Committee be discharged from further consideration of S. 1349 and that the Senate then proceed to its immediate consideration.

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

The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1349) to authorize the Secretary of Transportation to issue a certificate of documentation with appropriate endorsement for employment in the coastwise trade for the vessel *Prince Nova*, and for other purposes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection to the immediate consideration of the bill?

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. LOTT. I ask unanimous consent that the bill be read three times, passed, the motion to reconsider be laid on the table, and that any statements related thereto be printed in the RECORD.

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

The bill (S. 1349) was passed, as follows:

S. 1349

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

SECTION 1. DOCUMENTATION OF THE VESSEL PRINCE NOVA.

(a) DOCUMENTATION AUTHORIZED.—Notwithstanding section 27 of the Merchant Marine Act, 1920 (46 U.S.C. App. 883), section 8 of the Act of June 19, 1886 (24 Stat. 81, chapter 421; 46 U.S.C. App. 289), and section 12106 of title 46, United States Code, the Secretary of Transportation may issue a certificate of documentation with appropriate endorsement for employment in the coastwise trade for the vessel PRINCE NOVA (Canadian registration number 320804).

(b) EXPIRATION OF CERTIFICATE.—A certificate of documentation issued for the vessel under subsection (a) shall expire unless—

(1) the vessel undergoes conversion, reconstruction, repair, rebuilding, or retrofitting in a shipyard located in the United States;

(2) the cost of that conversion, reconstruction, repair, rebuilding, or retrofitting is not less than the greater of—

(A) 3 times the purchase value of the vessel before the conversion, reconstruction, repair, rebuilding, or retrofitting; or

(B) $4,200,000; and

(3) not less than an average of $1,000,000 is spent annually in a shipyard located in the United States for conversion, reconstruction, repair, rebuilding, or retrofitting of the vessel until the total amount of the cost required under paragraph (2) is spent.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I yield the floor.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will now be a period for the transaction of morning business not to extend beyond the hour of 11 a.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

NATIONAL VETERANS CEMETERY

Mr. NICKLES. Mr. President, I rise to express my profound disappointment in the action the President took on November 1 of this year when he used his veto pen to line-item veto $900,000 from the VA-HUD appropriations bill. This money was set aside for the final planning and design of a new national veterans cemetery to be built at Fort Sill in Lawton, OK. While I am disappointed, I know my disappointment pales in comparison to the shock and frustration that the veterans of Oklahoma and their families have expressed to me and my staff regarding the President's action.

The shock and frustration expressed by veterans living in Oklahoma who have selflessly served our country and their families comes because the President's veto will further delay a national cemetery that has been in one stage of planning or another since 1987 when the Department of Veteran Affairs stated its intention to build a new national cemetery in Oklahoma.

I hope my colleagues will bear with me as I review what the veterans of Oklahoma and their families have gone through over the past 10 years.

Efforts to establish a national veterans cemetery in central Oklahoma date back to 1987. That year the Department of Veterans Affairs, in a report to Congress, identified central Oklahoma as an area in need of a national veterans cemetery because of Oklahoma's large veterans population and an official acknowledgment that the Fort Gibson cemetery in eastern Oklahoma would soon be full. The Oklahoma congressional delegation did not make this determination, Oklahoma's large veteran