

The "Bright Ideas" program initiated by these fine people continues to flourish. In 1994, North Carolina's electric cooperatives authorized a collaborative statewide effort and allocated \$225,000 annually for Bright Ideas for a five-year period. But a funny thing happened, Mr. President. These grants proved so successful that individual cooperatives are getting into the act and supplementing already allocated funds with money of their own. Their initiative will allow the cooperatives to award more than \$1 million dollars in grants a full year ahead of schedule.

In fact, Chuck Terrill, Executive Vice-President and CEO of the North Carolina Electric Membership Corporation says that "Bright Ideas" grants for North Carolina's school will top \$1.5 million by the end of the 1998-1999 school year.

Mr. President, "Bright Ideas" is just one of the many ways the members of North Carolina's electric cooperatives help their communities and support their public schools. I congratulate them for seeing a need and providing precious resources to challenge the children in North Carolina's classrooms.

#### THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business yesterday, Wednesday, June 24, 1998, the federal debt stood at \$5,503,890,151,659.51 (Five trillion, five hundred three billion, eight hundred ninety million, one hundred fifty-one thousand, six hundred fifty-nine dollars and fifty-one cents).

One year ago, June 24, 1997, the federal debt stood at \$5,336,558,000,000 (Five trillion, three hundred thirty-six billion, five hundred fifty-eight million).

Five years ago, June 24, 1993, the federal debt stood at \$4,304,357,000,000 (Four trillion, three hundred four billion, three hundred fifty-seven million).

Ten years ago, June 24, 1988, the federal debt stood at \$2,527,474,000,000 (Two trillion, five hundred twenty-seven billion, four hundred seventy-four million).

Fifteen years ago, June 24, 1983, the federal debt stood at \$1,303,410,000,000 (One trillion, three hundred three billion, four hundred ten million) which reflects a debt increase of more than \$4 trillion—\$4,200,480,151,659.51 (Four trillion, two hundred billion, four hundred eighty million, one hundred fifty-one thousand, six hundred fifty-nine dollars and fifty-one cents) during the past 15 years.

#### U.S. FOREIGN OIL CONSUMPTION FOR WEEK ENDING JUNE 19TH

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, the American Petroleum Institute has reported that for the week ending June 19 that the U.S. imported 7,883,000 barrels of oil each day, more than a quarter million (253,000) barrels a day more

than the 7,630,000 imported during the same week a year ago.

Americans relied on foreign oil for 55.5 percent of their needs last week. There are no signs that the upward spiral will abate. Before the Persian Gulf War, the United States imported about 45 percent of its oil supply from foreign countries. During the Arab oil embargo in the 1970s, foreign oil accounted for only 35 percent of America's oil supply.

All Americans should ponder the economic calamity certain to occur in the U.S. if and when foreign producers shut off our supply—or double the already enormous cost of imported oil flowing into the U.S.—now 7,883,000 barrels a day at a cost of approximately \$78,908,830 a day.

#### SUPREME COURT'S LINE ITEM VETO DECISION

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, today the United States Supreme Court held the Line Item Veto Act unconstitutional. I voted against that Act when it was considered by the Senate and joined the senior Senator from West Virginia and others in warning giving the President, any President, line item veto authority would result in a dramatic shift in power from the legislative branch to the executive branch that was inconsistent with the constitutional principles of separation of powers. We warned that this shift in power that would damage our fundamental principle of majority rule, encourage horse trading between Members of Congress and the President, and not reduce the deficit in any meaningful way. Unfortunately, all of those warnings have come true.

In 1997 I called upon Congress to admit its mistake and repeal this unconstitutional Act before the courts struck it down. Congress was given a second opportunity to correct its ill-considered action when the Supreme Court dismissed, on the limited ground of lack of standing, the challenge brought by Senator BYRD. In that case, *Byrd v. Raines*, District Judge Jackson had ruled that the Act violated the Constitution.

Having failed to do its job properly, the majority in Congress is now confronted with a Supreme Court that was forced to do the Congress' job. Consistent with its judicial power under the Constitution, the Supreme Court has once again had to preserve the Constitution from legislative attack. As it did when it defended the First Amendment from being undermined by the so-called Communications Decency Act, and when it defended federalism against the encroachment of the Brady Act, here again the Supreme Court has been called upon to preserve, protect and defend the Constitution. As a Senator who voted against these measures in spite of their momentary popularity, and as a Vermonter who cherishes the Constitution and the freedoms that it guarantees, I thank the Court for its service.

I have long been concerned that the line item veto encourages minority rule by allowing a presidential item veto to stand with the support of only 34 Senators or 146 Representatives. That is not majority rule. Those anti-democratic super-majority requirements are fundamentally at odds with the principles underlying legislative action.

Our Founders rejected such super-majority requirements on matters within Congress' purview. Alexander Hamilton described super-majority requirements as a "poison" that serves "to destroy the energy of the government, and to substitute the pleasure, caprice, or artifices of an insignificant, turbulent, or corrupt junto to the regular deliberations and decisions of a respectable majority." Such super-majority requirements reflect a basic distrust not just of Congress, but of the electorate itself.

In addition, these super-majority requirements hurt small states, like my home State of Vermont, by upping the ante for those who dare take on the President. Under the line item veto, Members from small states have to convince two-thirds of each House to override the President's veto for the sake of a project. With Vermont having only one representative in the House, why would other Members risk the President's wrath to help us with a vetoed project? It is truly a task for Hercules to override a veto. Just look at the record—of the more than 2,500 Presidential vetoes in our history, Congress has been able to override 105.

As the senior Senator from West Virginia has so forcefully argued, we should tread carefully when expanding the fiscal powers of the presidency. The line item veto would have weakened one of the fundamental checks and balances that form the separation of powers under our Constitution. The line item veto would have handed over the power of the purse to the President.

I have heard the howls of some of my colleagues who lost worthy appropriations since the approval of the line item veto. And what if the President makes a mistake by line item vetoing a worthy project? The Administration even admitted that it mistakenly vetoed some projects. Do Senators trust the bureaucrats over at the Office of Management and Budget to decide, within a few short days, which projects are deserving and which are not? Is that consistent with the Founders' vision?

I was born and raised in Vermont and go home almost every weekend. I am confident that I have a better sense of Vermont than someone who thinks Vermont is an avenue that lies somewhere between K and L streets in northwest Washington, D.C.

Let us keep the power of the purse with Congress—where it belongs. As the Ranking Member of the Foreign Operations Subcommittee of the Appropriations Committee, I am frequently called upon to visit emerging