

which restores the point of order preventing Senators from attaching legislative "riders" to appropriations measures.

This measure will go a long way toward preventing gridlock over policy matters in spending bills.

These procedural changes would, in my view, go a long way toward restoring openness, fairness, and public input in the process of spending the taxpayers' dollars. We would be able to pass budgets in the normal process, rather than budget by brinkmanship.

These budget reform proposals are not a political exercise. These reforms are long-overdue and real. It is my intention to work with the leadership to move this legislation quickly. It is very important we act before the appropriations season begins in earnest.

To do nothing to reform our budget process is far more dangerous than to try and not succeed. Budget process reform must be adopted to insure that we do not waste the opportunity to start shaving away at our massive national debt. The system is set up to have checks and balances. Lately, we have drifted from this process. Congress must adopt meaningful budget process reform this year, or risk further fiscal monstrosities like the fiscal year 1999 omnibus appropriations bill.

Clearly, the process by which we spend Americans' hard-earned dollars is flawed and needs to be changed. I hope my colleagues will acknowledge the obvious, and push for comprehensive budget process reform at the earliest opportunity.

#### THE "ED-FLEX" PROGRAM

Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. President, I rise today to urge my colleagues' support for important legislation introduced by Senator FRIST and WYDEN, the Education Flexibility Act. This legislation would expand the popular "Ed-Flex" program to all 50 states. Currently, 12 states, including Michigan, participate in the program.

Through the "Ed-Flex" program, the Department of Education delegates to the states its power to grant individual school districts temporary waivers from certain federal requirements if those requirements interfere with state and local efforts to improve education. To be eligible, a State must be able to waive its own regulations on schools. The State must hold schools accountable for results by setting academic standards and measuring student performance, requiring schools to publish school report cards, and intervening in low performance schools. This program does a great deal to reduce the regulatory burden for states trying to improve the education it provides to its citizens.

This program has been a tremendous success in Michigan. The first benefit came to Michigan in simply applying for the program. It was during this process that the Governor's office realized it did not meet the two criteria

necessary to apply for the waiver because the state could not waive its own regulations. As a result, the Governor's office worked with the State legislature and State Board of Education to prepare and obtain this authority. Another benefit of the "Ed-Flex" program came when the state put in place the Waiver Referent Group. This group is made up of representatives from the Department, local and intermediate school districts, private schools, parent organizations, advisory and professional groups, and business/community members. Through this collaboration, the State will receive input on potential regulations that may help reduce barriers to reform from the people most closely associated with the regulations that are hindering their ability to achieve real and lasting reform.

I am proud to be an original cosponsor of this important legislation. I am confident that the "Ed-Flex" program will be as valuable of a tool to education reform for other states as it has been to Michigan's education reform efforts.

#### THE TRADE FAIRNESS ACT OF 1999

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Mr. President, I rise today to introduce legislation which will help the President deal with the flood of dirt-cheap steel imports from our trading partners. I introduce this legislation with the full knowledge that there are many actions required to respond to the steel import crisis that is corroding the United States' steel industry's ability to compete. This crisis is hurting our steelworkers and our companies. It must be dealt with as a top priority in the 106th Congress.

The bill I am introducing today deals with two important aspects of this crisis: monitoring imports and remedying injury to domestic industries under our trade laws. The bill has two main parts. The first section reforms Section 201 of the Trade Act of 1974 to conform its standard of injury to that of our world trading partners. This reform will affect all products which are covered by Section 201 by revising the U.S. standard for injury to the standard used in the World Trade Organization's Safeguards Code. The second section of the bill will help us better track steel imports by requiring an import permit for steel and establishing a monitoring program. This will allow us to track steel imports, as many of our trading partners currently have the ability to do. It will provide import data in a more timely fashion and help us better anticipate future import problems. I am proposing the "Trade Fairness Act of 1999" along with my colleague and Senate Steel Caucus co-chair, Senator SPECTER, in order to strengthen the President's ability to help domestic industries receive the relief they need and deserve when imports are a cause of serious injury, and so we know what when significant amounts of foreign steel are entering our country.

Import relief is what the U.S. steel industry desperately needs right now. This bill contains provisions that will help us more effectively deal with future import problems, but it will not provide the immediate assistance that our steel industry needs to survive this crisis. Within a matter of days, we will have the steel import data from the end of last quarter. I fully expect it will show that the United States is still enduring an unprecedented level of steel imports. I also strongly believe that most of those imports continue to be sold at historically low prices; prices which are below the cost of actual production in many instances. American steel manufacturers cannot fight this unfair trade practice without help. West Virginia and other major steel makers deserve help now, before it is too late. This measure addresses some of the structural reforms needed to deal with import surges in the future, but, again, I have to admit it won't do what's needed to stop the flood of steel imports. I firmly believe that a 201 action is what is required, now, to stop the imports. I have strenuously made that case to the Administration, and will continue to make that case to the President and his advisors, as well as my colleagues on the Finance Committee, and in the Congress. I am also likely to submit other legislative remedies to deal with the emergency which faces the United States' steel industry and its workers.

This legislation I am introducing today includes reforms we need to improve the way U.S. trade laws function in a crisis. The import licensing will help the steel industry specifically, but the Section 201 reforms will ultimately benefit all products where foreign competitors have dumped their product on the American market. I intend to push these provisions during the Finance Committee's consideration of trade legislation in the 106th Congress. The 201 reforms will improve our ability to remedy harm against domestic industries and at the same time remain consistent with rules we expect our world trading partners to live by. We can be tough and fair on trade at the same time and the bill I am introducing today proves it.

In my state of West Virginia, our two largest steel manufacturers, Weirton Steel and Wheeling Pittsburgh Steel, have been hit hard by the steel import crisis. Weirton alone has laid off over 900 workers and there is the possibility that their fourth quarter earnings and order book could force these two companies to consider additional lay offs in the near future. Wheeling-Pittsburgh is also worried about the effect of the crisis on their bottom-line. Laying off workers is never easy, but this crisis is forcing hard decisions. West Virginia steel makers are producing world-class products as efficiently as any foreign competitor, but when foreign competitors are blatantly dumping their product at prices which are sometimes actually below the cost of production,