

North Vietnamese; we were hurting our troops who were overseas; we were basically un-American for objecting to the war.

One of the generational changes that has taken place—I want the record to show this—sitting with a number of Senators and Congresspersons—I am guessing the number at 20—in the private residence this morning, the President of the United States said to us assembled he wanted to make one thing clear, that he respected the Congress voting. He knew some who opposed were going to be told that Milosevic is listening and he is going to take some confidence from this; he is going to somehow be emboldened by the opposition.

He said, “I want you to know I think you have an absolute right and obligation, if you believe that way, to object. I will never be one who will tell you that, notwithstanding he is watching this on CNN in Belgrade, that somehow you’re undermining our effort. Were we to apply that standard,” he said, “we would never be able to debate in this society the important issues.”

So the reason I mention that is not to give particular credit to the President, although in this case he deserves it, but he came from that same generation. I think we have moved to a position here where we have debated, in the last several years, the major contentious issues relating to our peace and security, and that when the debate has been finished, when it has gone on, it has been cordial and it has not been partisan.

When it has been finished, there has been unanimity and support of American forces. The same occurred in the gulf. After the gulf, many of us voted no. I was one who voted no. And at the end of the day, we all said, once the Senate spoke, once the President spoke, once the Congress spoke, we would stay the course.

So I thank my friend from Idaho who was in opposition, my friend, the Presiding Officer, who had a different view on this to tell you. And I am not being solicitous. It is important for the American people to know we do not always disagree based on our partisan instincts here.

The judgments made by every Senator on this floor today were made with their intellect and their heart, on the direction that they thought was in the best interest of the country. I think the right outcome occurred, but I do not in any way—in any way—question the motivation, or am I so certain of my own position that I would be willing to guarantee either of my colleagues that they are wrong. I think they were wrong. I think I am right. But we are approaching this in the way we should, openly and in a nonpartisan way. I want to thank the Republican leadership for proceeding this way and thank my colleagues for the way in which we conducted this debate earlier.

I yield the floor.

Mr. CRAIG addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Idaho.

Mr. CRAIG. Madam President, I thank my colleague from Delaware for those remarks.

#### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. CRAIG. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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

#### THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Madam President, at the close of business yesterday, Monday, March 22, 1999, the federal debt stood at \$5,642,227,279,510.37 (Five trillion, six hundred forty-two billion, two hundred twenty-seven million, two hundred seventy-nine thousand, five hundred ten dollars and thirty-seven cents).

Five years ago, March 22, 1994, the federal debt stood at \$4,557,220,000,000 (Four trillion, five hundred fifty-seven billion, two hundred twenty million).

Ten years ago, March 22, 1989, the federal debt stood at \$2,736,549,000,000 (Two trillion, seven hundred thirty-six billion, five hundred forty-nine million).

Fifteen years ago, March 22, 1984, the federal debt stood at \$1,465,629,000,000 (One trillion, four hundred sixty-five billion, six hundred twenty-nine million).

Twenty-five years ago, March 22, 1974, the federal debt stood at \$471,830,000,000 (Four hundred seventy-one billion, eight hundred thirty million) which reflects a debt increase of more than \$5 trillion—\$5,170,397,279,510.37 (Five trillion, one hundred seventy billion, three hundred ninety-seven million, two hundred seventy-nine thousand, five hundred ten dollars and thirty-seven cents) during the past 25 years.

#### GEORGE MITCHELL'S MEDAL OF FREEDOM

Mr. KENNEDY. Madam President, few individuals have made a greater contribution to the cause of peace in Northern Ireland than our friend and former Senate colleague, Senator George Mitchell. His leadership was indispensable in helping the political leaders of Northern Ireland achieve the historic Good Friday Peace Agreement of 1998.

Last Wednesday, on St. Patrick's Day, President Clinton presented Senator Mitchell with the nation's highest civilian honor, the Presidential Medal of Freedom. In accepting the award, Senator Mitchell demonstrated again why he has been so vital to the peace process. He spoke directly and movingly to the political leaders on both sides of Northern Ireland, many of

whom were in the White House audience. He reminded them of how far they had come in their search for peace. He urged them to resolve the current difficulties and enable the peace agreement to continue to be implemented.

As he said so eloquently, “History might have forgiven failure to reach an agreement, since no one thought it possible. But once the agreement was reached, history will never forgive the failure to carry it forward.”

#### SIXTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF BOONVILLE, MO, LIONS CLUB

Mr. ASHCROFT. Madam President, I am pleased to offer my enthusiastic congratulations to the Boonville, Missouri Lions Club which celebrates its 60th anniversary on April 17, 1999.

Long before President Bush spoke of a “thousand points of light,” the Lions sparkled in Boonville. Over the years they have been recognized for their tireless work to aid both research and victims of sight and hearing impairments, diabetes, and other maladies. Always a strong force in local charities, they truly embody their motto: “We Serve.”

The Lions Club of Boonville has enjoyed sixty years of achievement through good deeds and good fellowships. I salute them.

#### THE TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. SPECTER. Madam President, I congratulate the Department of Veterans Affairs on its 10th anniversary of becoming a cabinet level department of the federal government. On March 15, 1989, the new Department of Veterans Affairs was established, headed by a Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

Over the past ten years, VA has worked hard to fulfill its commitments to our nation's veterans by providing benefits and health care to millions of Americans who have given so much to protect and defend our country and its liberties. Among VA's many contributions: VA research scientists and practitioners have led in the advancement of medical research and health care delivery; VA benefits such as home loans, life insurance and educational support have been immensely helpful in transitioning active duty military members back into civilian life; and VA disability payments aid veterans injured in the line of duty as partial compensation by a grateful nation for their many sacrifices.

As Chairman of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, I will help ensure that VA sustains these many programs to meet the myriad needs of an aging veteran population. I am certain my colleagues share that commitment as well.

The mission of the VA, as enunciated by President Abraham Lincoln, is “To care for him who shall have borne the