

a discriminatory practice known as "wear away." This practice prevents older and longer service workers from earning new benefits under the cash-balance plan until that benefit exceeds the original promised benefit. We must end the practice of wear away immediately.

Our amendment calls on Congress to enact legislation this year requiring, at a minimum, that employers provide workers with adequate notice of a change in their pension plan that reduces future benefits. It also prohibits the discriminatory practice of wear away. Our amendment makes clear that Congress will take whatever action is necessary to assure older workers that they will not be short-changed when it comes to their retirement security. It is long past time for Congress to act and protect our older and longer service workers. We value older workers in America—we don't "wear them away."

GUN VIOLENCE

Mr. HUTCHINSON. Mr. President, I rise today in support of S. 2390 which Senator DEWINE introduced yesterday. I am proud to be an original cosponsor of this legislation. I know that, unlike additional infringements on the constitutional rights of law-abiding Americans, this bill will effectively reduce gun violence and save lives.

Like many of my colleagues, I am extremely concerned about gun violence. In my home state of Arkansas, there are several cities which have long been plagued by extraordinarily high levels of violence and murder, largely fueled by illegal guns, gangs, and drug trafficking. According to the 1998 Uniform Crime Reports, Little Rock, with a population of 176,377, North Little Rock with a population of 60,619, and Pine Bluff, with a population of 54,062, had 25, 8, and 17 murders respectively. The rate of murder per 100,000 inhabitants in North Little Rock-Little Rock was 10.3 and it was 33.8 in Pine Bluff and significantly exceeded the national rate of 6.3 murders per 100,000 inhabitants. Nonetheless, I have received literally thousands of letters from Arkansas asking me not to support additional gun control measures, but rather to simply enforce the laws already in effect.

My constituents are right. We do not need more gun laws. We just need to enforce those already on the books. The facts show that the Clinton Administration has not done this; from 1992 to 1998 prosecutions of defendants who use a firearm in connection with a felony have decreased nearly 50 percent, from 7,045 to approximately 3,800. In addition, while more than 500,000 convicted felons and other prohibited purchasers have been prevented from purchasing firearms from federally, licensed firearms dealers under the Brady Handgun Violence Prevent Act, only 200 of these persons have been referred to the United States Department

of Justice for prosecution. I have carefully studied the Project Exile program in Richmond, Virginia and am convinced that it saves lives. Before Project Exile was implemented, Richmond was one of the nation's murder capitals, and Project Exile resulted in a 40 percent reduction in the number of murders committed with firearms. That is why for the past several months, I have been working to implement Arkansas Exile. By supporting S. 2390, I hope to obtain the additional funding necessary to allow Arkansas and other states to implement a program proven to reduce gun violence.

Finally, I support S. 2390 because it is the right approach. The President and many of my Senate colleagues condemn firearms, which are inanimate objects, and the gun industry while ignoring and working to overturn the well-established legal principle and a third-party's criminal act is an unforeseeable event for which a merchant may not be held liable. I am saddened and alarmed that the President and cities throughout the nation are using the vast resources for their governments to force the gun industry to take responsibility for the acts of criminals, and I am determined to do all I can do that the criminals, not the gun industry and law-abiding Americans, are held responsible for gun violence.

WRONGFUL IMPRISONMENT OF 13 IRANIAN JEWS

Mr. ASHCROFT. Mr. President, I rise today to speak on behalf of the thirteen Iranian Jews wrongfully imprisoned and facing trial in Iran. I join with concerned people of all faiths around the nation, and the world, in calling for the observation of fundamental human rights and the ultimate goal of freedom for these innocent people.

Iran has recently taken some positive steps away from political and religious repression toward the acceptance of freedom, justice, and democracy. Reforms, however, have been marred by a disheartening lack of concern for the human rights of religious minorities in Iran. Throughout my life, I have been committed to furthering fundamental human rights, especially religious freedom, for both Americans and people throughout the world. Therefore, I was deeply concerned by the February 1999 arrest of thirteen Iranian Jews informally accused of spying for Israel and the United States. Today, ten of the thirteen are still in jail awaiting trial, while the other three have been released on bail. This situation is especially troubling because these innocent community and religious leaders could face the death penalty if convicted.

Mr. President, this entire legal ordeal has been filled with Iranian Constitutional violations and shrouded in secrecy. For instance, the thirteen have never been formally charged or indicted. This should be the first step

in any legal proceeding, but it now appears almost certain the defendants will not know the charges they face until the trial begins. As a former Attorney General of Missouri, I fully appreciate what a daunting, if not impossible, task it would be to build a credible defense without knowing the charges.

Additionally, although it appears the Iranian government might have recently reversed its previous position and agreed to allow the thirteen to choose their own legal counsel, the judge in the case has refused access to the defendants by their chosen attorneys. Beyond the seriously limiting results of this decision, the chosen attorneys cannot officially become the defendant's counsel until the necessary legal documents are signed, which will not occur until the attorneys and defendants meet. The courts have created one of the worst "Catch-22s" I have seen.

It also troubles me that the trial will be conducted in secrecy. After repeated requests by international observers and the press, the decision to keep the trial secret has been affirmed by the courts. For these obvious reasons, I believe it likely that the thirteen will not receive a fair and impartial trial.

The members of the Jewish Iranian community, who out of respect and fear of the Islamic majority rarely speak out in public, have even made an uncharacteristic plea to the Iranian government. I join with this community in asking for all defendants in Iran, regardless of religion or standing, to have access to legal counsel of their own choosing, and to be afforded the requirements of Iranian law for fair and open trials. In addition, I urge the Iranian government to grant permission for the ten jailed Iranian Jewish defendants to go home on furlough for Passover, which begins on the evening of April 19th, if the proceedings have not yet been completed.

Mr. President, I rise today in support of the basic principles of human rights and religious freedom. The Iranian government must do the right thing and provide these defendants their fundamental rights, and the International Community must use all available pressure and diplomatic avenues to influence them to do so. And the United States Government should demonstrate real leadership by diligently working to see the ultimate release of these thirteen Jewish Iranian defendants.

THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business yesterday, Tuesday, April 11, 2000, the Federal debt stood at \$5,763,650,722,859.87 (Five trillion, seven hundred sixty-three billion, six hundred fifty million, seven hundred twenty-two thousand, eight hundred fifty-nine dollars and eighty-seven cents).

Five years ago, April 11, 1995, the Federal debt stood at \$4,871,386,000,000