

I hope my colleagues over the week-end will have a chance to take a look at this amendment, will come to the floor and talk about it, and perhaps question those of us who have proposed it. Then I hope a strong bipartisan majority will support it when it comes to a vote next Tuesday.

I thank the distinguished Chair. I yield the floor.

BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, I would like to take a few minutes to discuss an issue of considerable importance, one I feel very strongly about and one that I think the Senate should address before the end of this Congressional session, and that is Mr. President, the issue of the digital divide. The digital divide is one of the key issues the Congress is currently facing—and will continue to face—in the foreseeable future. Right now we are wrestling with how to best encourage growth in this new economy, but at the same time, how to ensure that growth is evenly spread, that everyone in our society has an opportunity to participate in this new economy and reap its economic rewards.

Mr. President, these are amazing times in which we live and the new economy is responsible for much of this nation's unprecedented prosperity: the stock market is soaring to unimaginable heights. IPO's are occurring at a record pace and creating literally thousands of millionaires in this country. The innovations of the new technologies are astounding: You can order a Saturn online and the very next day a new car shows up in your drive-way. Each day 25,000 new E-BAY subscribers sign up for the world's largest auction. The NetSchools program provides every child with a kid-proof laptop PC that is connected to teachers and classmates using wireless infrared technology and has had tremendous results improving academic achievement, attendance, and parental involvement in extremely disadvantaged communities. A surgeon in Boston can direct a doctor in the Berkshires to do a biopsy by using telemedicine equipment. These innovations and hundreds more like them are changing how we live.

The wealth creation—for those on the right side of the divide—generated by this New Economy is breathtaking, Mr. President: College students go from the dorm room to the board room as high tech moguls, like Jerry Yang and Michael Dell. Starting salaries for high tech jobs even for students coming out of college can range from \$70,000-\$100,000—even more with stock options. Pick up the San Jose Mercury News job section each day and—literally—you will find advertisements for upwards of 10,000 high tech and information technology jobs. Silicon Valley has created more than 275,000 new jobs since 1992—and median family income has soared to \$87,000 per year—the third highest in the country.

But as we all know Mr. President, the new economy has not evenly spread its wealth to all Americans and income disparity in this nation continues to grow. One of the greatest challenges we currently face is to connect those not participating in the new economy with the skills, resources, and support necessary for them to do so. A January 2000 study by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities and the Economic Policy Institute found that in two-thirds of the states, the gap in incomes between the top 20 percent of families and the bottom 20 percent of families grew between the late 1980s and the late 1990s. In three-fourths of the states, income gaps between the top fifth and middle fifth of families grew over the last decade. By contrast, inequality declined significantly in only three states. Clearly Mr. President, the digital divide and the economic divide are closely interrelated and must be responded to as such.

Mr. President, the new economy is more than the latest and greatest innovations in information technology and the highest-flying Internet companies. It is a knowledge economy, with a large share of the workforce employed in office jobs requiring some level of higher education. It is a global economy—the sum of U.S. imports and exports rose from 11 percent of gross domestic product in 1970 to 25 percent in 1997. This emerging economy is driven by innovation in every arena from traditional manufacturing to health care, and even farming and fishing.

The new economy is powerful and exciting, but the digital divide is real and cannot afford to be ignored. Let me describe to you what this divide looks like.

The Digital Divide:

61.6% of those with college degrees now use the Internet, while only 6.6% of those with an elementary school education or less use the Internet.

At the highest incomes (\$75,000+), the White/Black divide for computer ownership decreased by 76.2% between 1994 and 1998.

Whites are more likely to have access to the Internet from home, than Blacks or Hispanics have from any location.

Black and Hispanic households are 2/5 as likely to have home Internet access as White households.

Forty-four million American adults, roughly 22 percent, do not have the reading and writing skills necessary for functioning in everyday life. And an estimated 87 percent of documents on the Internet are in English. Yet at least 32 million Americans speak a language other than English and they are—again and again—left behind on the Internet.

Those with a college degree or higher are over eight times more likely to have a computer at home than the least educated and nearly sixteen times more likely to have home Internet access.

The “digital divide” for Internet use between those at the highest and low-

est education levels widened by 25% from 1997 to 1998.

Those with college degrees or higher are ten times more likely to have Internet access at work as persons with only some high school education.

Mr. President technology is changing our world. Technology is changing our lives, how we work, and how we learn. But this is not just a new economy, it is our economy. And ours is not a newly divided society. Mr. President, this country has always been a society of haves and have nots, and so although we must respond to the unique challenges presented by the changing economy and the changing world of work, we must also understand that bridging the digital divide is about more than just computers and the Internet. In order to meet the challenge of bridging the digital divide we must assist the have nots with basic necessities, like a good public education system, a safe and clean place to live, and adequate health care. We must recognize what I hear from business leaders, teachers, students, parents—everyone—the biggest technology issue in the United States today is education. And we need to make that connection.

Originally when we talked about technology and education—the earlier days of our awareness that there was a growing digital divide—we were focused on wiring schools and outfitting them with equipment. Now, thanks in large part to the success of the E-Rate program, which we worked hard on in the Commerce Committee and which we pushed through to passage, now technology and education is about so much more. In just a few years most of our schools have gotten on-line. And now the focus is on training teachers to effectively use the technology, to integrate technology into the classroom, and to improve parental involvement through technology.

What we can do and what we must do Mr. President, is work to harness technology to grow our economy and enlarge the winner's circle. What we can do and what we must do is work to communicate this single reality: to keep the economic growth moving ahead, we need to work together to ensure that we have a workforce and a generation of young people capable of working with the best technology and the very best ideas to raise living standards and expand the economy—and that is why we must close the digital divide.

The digital divide goes far beyond technology to encompass basic human needs. Mr. President, if we can ensure that there is a computer in every classroom—for every student—the technology will not be effectively used, learning will continue to be challenged if the child does not have a safe and secure home to go to at the end of the day. If a child attends a school that is falling apart, does it matter how many computers are in the classroom and whether or not the school is wired? If a child lives in a dangerous and violent

community—a reality for far too many of this nation's young people—the fear of bullets and gangs is certain to triumph over the desire to conquer new technologies. If a child goes hungry, if school is the only place that can be counted on for a good meal, that child cannot focus on computing and learning.

Mr. President, these are the issues of the digital divide: adequate and affordable housing, safe and secure school buildings, adequate health care, qualified teachers, an increased minimum wage, strong communities, and affordable day care. We must understand that in order to seize upon this brilliant moment of technological advance and move our entire nation forward, we must address these basic needs. We must shore up the foundation, Mr. President and provide all our citizens with opportunity as we march forward in the digital age.

I ask my colleagues to ponder this for a moment: change is nothing new, technology is nothing new, the challenge is the same as it's ever been. But we can use these new technologies to extend opportunity to more Americans than ever before—or, if we're not careful, we could allow technology to heighten economic inequality and sharpen social divisions. By the same token, we can accelerate the most powerful engine of growth and prosperity the world has ever known—or allow that engine to stall. As every economics textbook will tell you, new technologies will continue to drive economic growth—but only if they continue to spread to all sectors of our economy and civic life. And that's the challenge that faces this Congress and this nation.

Mr. President, we have a real opportunity here—and I urge my colleagues to seize it—to close the divisions within our society that have always existed and also to close the digital divide.

FAMILY OPPORTUNITY ACT OF 2000

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Mr. President, recently my colleagues, Senators GRASSLEY, KENNEDY, JEFFORDS, and HARKIN introduced The Family Opportunity Act of 2000. I have proudly signed on to this important piece of legislation which will help hundreds of thousands of American families who have children with disabilities get access to Medicaid as well as obtain much needed support and information.

The Family Opportunity Act is modeled after last year's successful Work Incentives Improvement Act, which assures adults with disabilities can return to work and not risk losing their health care coverage. This new Act would create a state option to allow middle-income parents who have a child with special health needs to keep working, while having an option to buy in to Medicaid coverage for their child.

In my own state of West Virginia, over 50,000 children are known to have

a disability. I have heard personally from many of these families, who remind me about their daily struggles of sacrificing time, energy, and finances to provide the best environment for their child. In the past, this has meant that parents often refuse jobs, pay raises and overtime just to keep their incomes low enough so that they can qualify for services under Medicaid for their children with special health care needs.

Medicaid coverage is so crucial to the child because many private plans do not offer essential services such as occupational, physical and speech therapy, mental health services, home and community-based services, and durable medical equipment such as walkers and wheelchairs, which if uncovered, can be financially devastating to a family. Under the Family Opportunity Act, families would be required to first take employer-sponsored health coverage if available. The option to buy in to Medicaid would be used as a supplement to existing private insurance or as stand alone coverage if employer-based coverage were not an option.

In addition to creating Medicaid buy-in options for families, the Family Opportunity Act proposes the establishment of Family to Family Health Information Centers. These Centers, staffed by both parents and professionals would be available to help families identify and access appropriate health care for their children with special needs, as well as answer questions on filling out the necessary paperwork to establish health care coverage.

The Family Opportunity Act promises to promote early intervention, ensures medically necessary services, offers support, and will help restore family stability. I applaud my colleagues for proposing this important legislation, but even more important, I give a standing ovation to the dedicated families who give so greatly of themselves to care for their children.

THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business yesterday, Thursday, June 15, 2000, the Federal debt stood at \$5,644,606,868,488.81 (Five trillion, six hundred forty-four billion, six hundred and six million, eight hundred and sixty-eight thousand, four hundred eighty-eight dollars and eighty-one cents).

Last year, June 16, 1999, the Federal debt stood at \$5,579,687,718,133.89 (Five trillion, five hundred seventy-nine billion, six hundred eighty-seven million, seven hundred eighteen thousand, one hundred and thirty-three dollars and eighty-nine cents).

Five years ago, June 16, 1995, the Federal debt stood at \$4,893,073,000,000 (Four trillion, eight hundred ninety-three billion, seventy-three million, seven hundred eighteen thousand, one hundred and thirty-three dollars and eighty-nine cents).

Ten years ago, June 16, 1990, the Federal debt stood at \$3,121,688,000,000

(Three trillion, one hundred twenty-one billion, six hundred eighty-eight million).

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

HONORS FOR AN ARKANSAS STUDENT

• Mrs. LINCOLN. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute and to recognize a fellow Arkansan, Blake Rutherford, for his accomplishments at Middlebury College in Vermont. Blake is a native of Little Rock, attended Little Rock Central High School, and will be graduating from Middlebury College with a degree in Political Science in August 2000. This fine young man is the first student ever chosen at Middlebury College to give the Student Commencement Address. This is a well deserved honor for Blake Rutherford and I wholeheartedly congratulate him on his achievements. I ask that the text of his speech be included following my remarks.

BLAKE RUTHERFORD'S COMMENCEMENT SPEECH

Today, we are fortunate to experience one of the great accomplishments in life. Like thousands throughout America, we are gathered at the beginning of a new millennium, a unique time in our nation and in our world. But unlike thousands we have come together in a very special place—nestled between the Adirondacks and the Green Mountains—a place where we worked hard, played hard, made lifelong friends, and have spent some of the best years of our lives. Paraphrasing the legendary Bob Hope, "Middlebury: Thanks for the Memories."

I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the Class of 2000—individually and collectively—for your achievements. I also want to thank the Board of Trustees, the administration, faculty, and staff for providing us the very best. And I especially want to thank our parents and families for paying for it.

At our centennial celebration one hundred years ago, the Middlebury Register characterized it as the "day of days for the undergraduate." Today, a century later, is most certainly our day of days and one that we will celebrate and remember forever with great pride, for as Emerson noted, "The reward of a thing well done, is to have done it."

Middlebury College began in 1800 under the direction of President Jeremiah Atwater in a small building with only seven students. As we see almost 200 hundred years later, more than 2000 students larger, under the direction of President John McCardell, much has changed.

Built for only \$8,000, Painter Hall, constructed between 1814 and 1816, is currently the oldest building on campus. Although it stands the same today, the environment and the atmosphere around it do not.

Admittance into Middlebury in 1815 used to consist of a forty-minute oral examination in Latin, Greek and arithmetic. Remembering back four years ago, I could only wish the process was as simple.

But today, thanks to the efforts of many, Middlebury is blessed with a stronger, more diverse student body than it has ever had.

We have seen the number of applicants to Middlebury grow steadily over the past four years.

We have seen the number of minorities on campus grow over the past four years.